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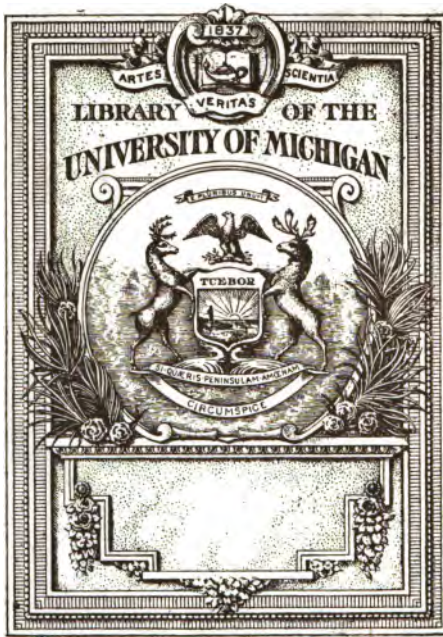
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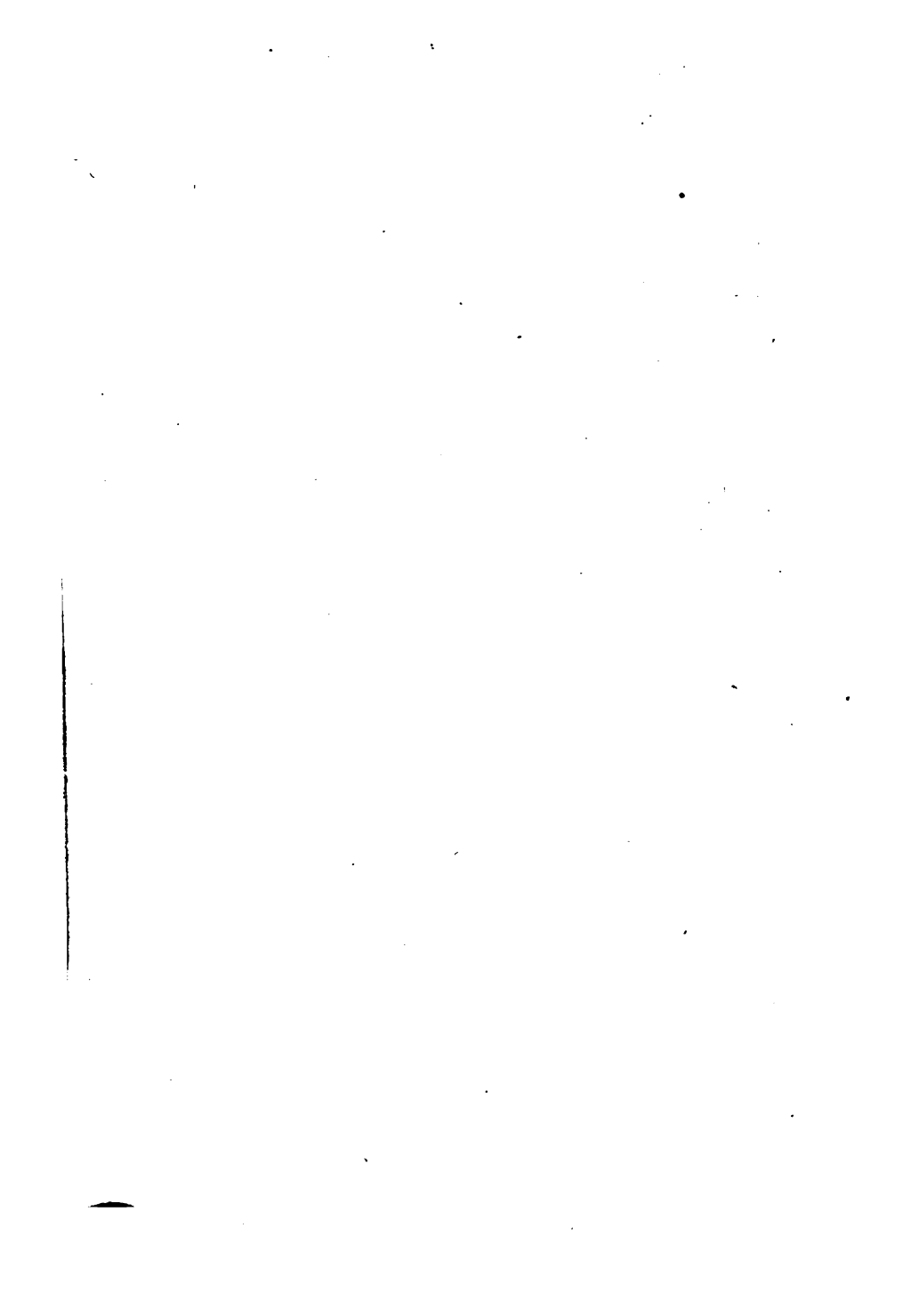


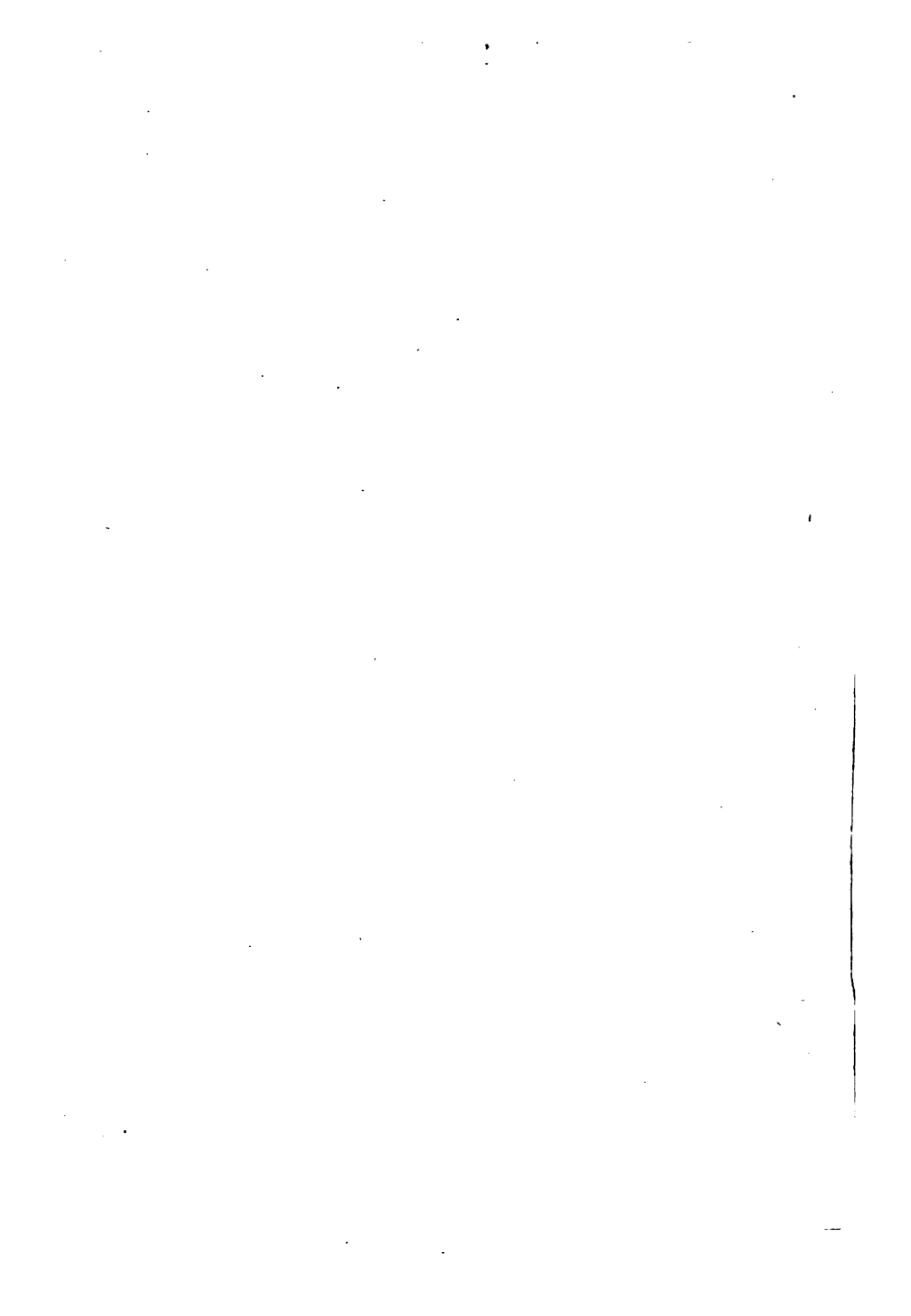
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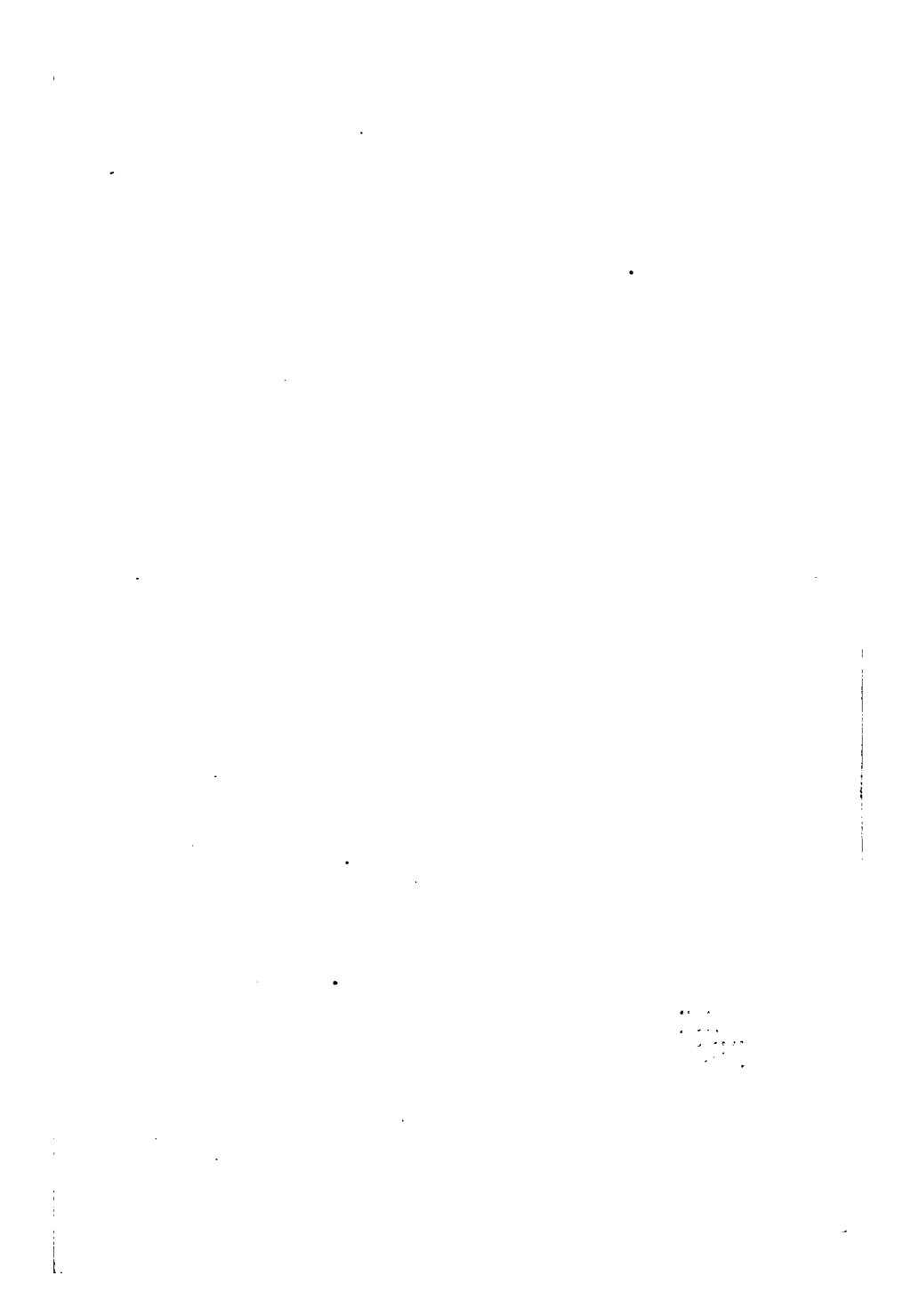
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ON A FRENCH MEADOW WAY

ALONG FRENCH BYWAYS

WRITTEN AND
ILLUSTRATED BY
CLIFTON JOHNSON



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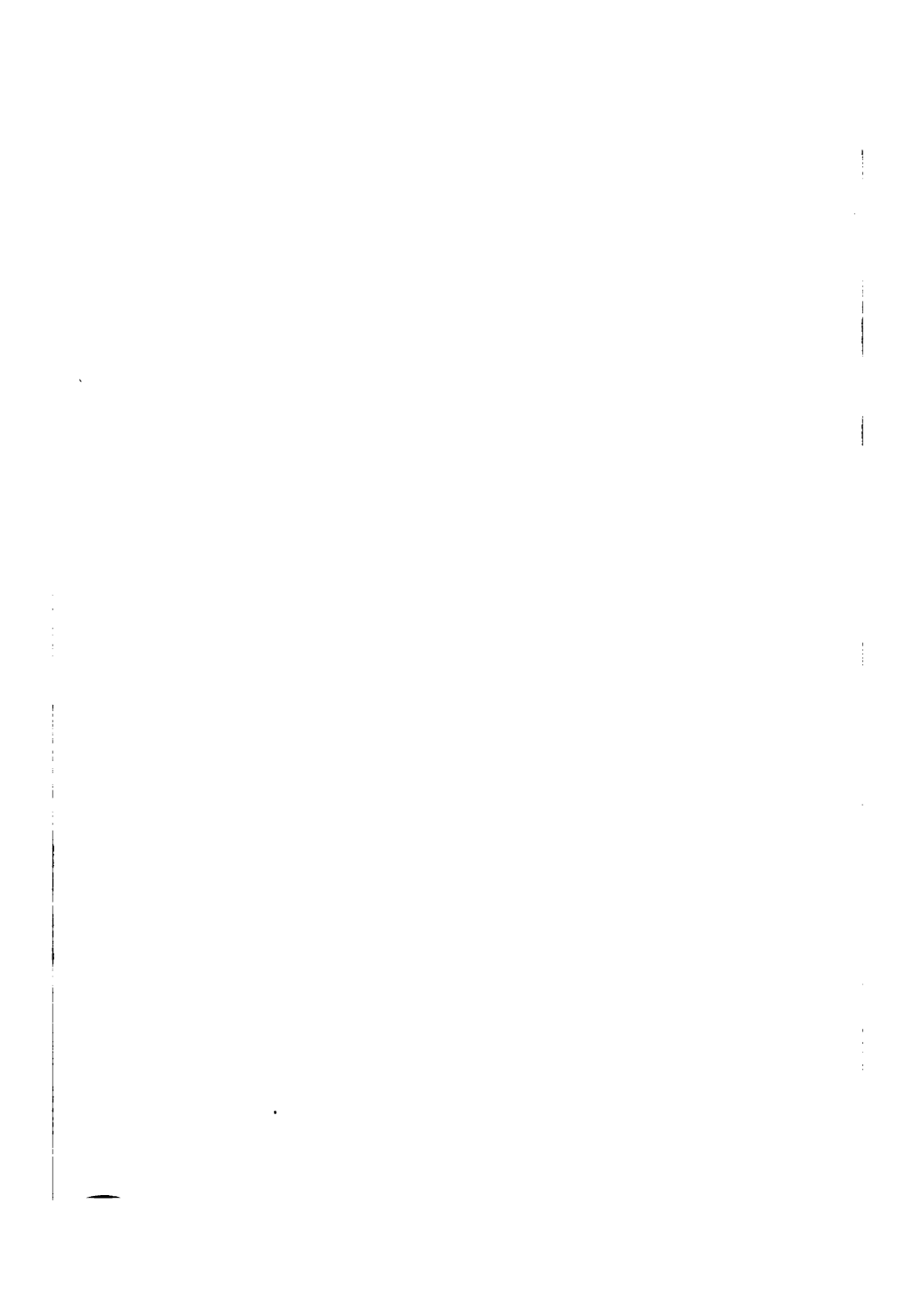
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Introductory Note

It is not always easy for a writer, in selecting a title for a new book, to hit on one that exactly meets all the needs of the subject. There must often be some compromise, some sacrifice. Thus, in the case of the present volume, the title may prove misleading if taken too literally. The paths I trod were not always secluded, or those with which our tourists are unfamiliar; and I can only offer the excuse that they always receive a "byway" treatment. It is a book of strolling, a book of nature, a book of humble peasant life, intermingled with the chance experiences of the narrator. It has little to do with large towns, but much with rural villages, farm firesides, the fields, and the country lanes. I finish it with the hope that it may be accorded the same pleasant reception given its predecessor, "Among English Hedgerows."

CLIFTON JOHNSON.



Along French Byways

I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

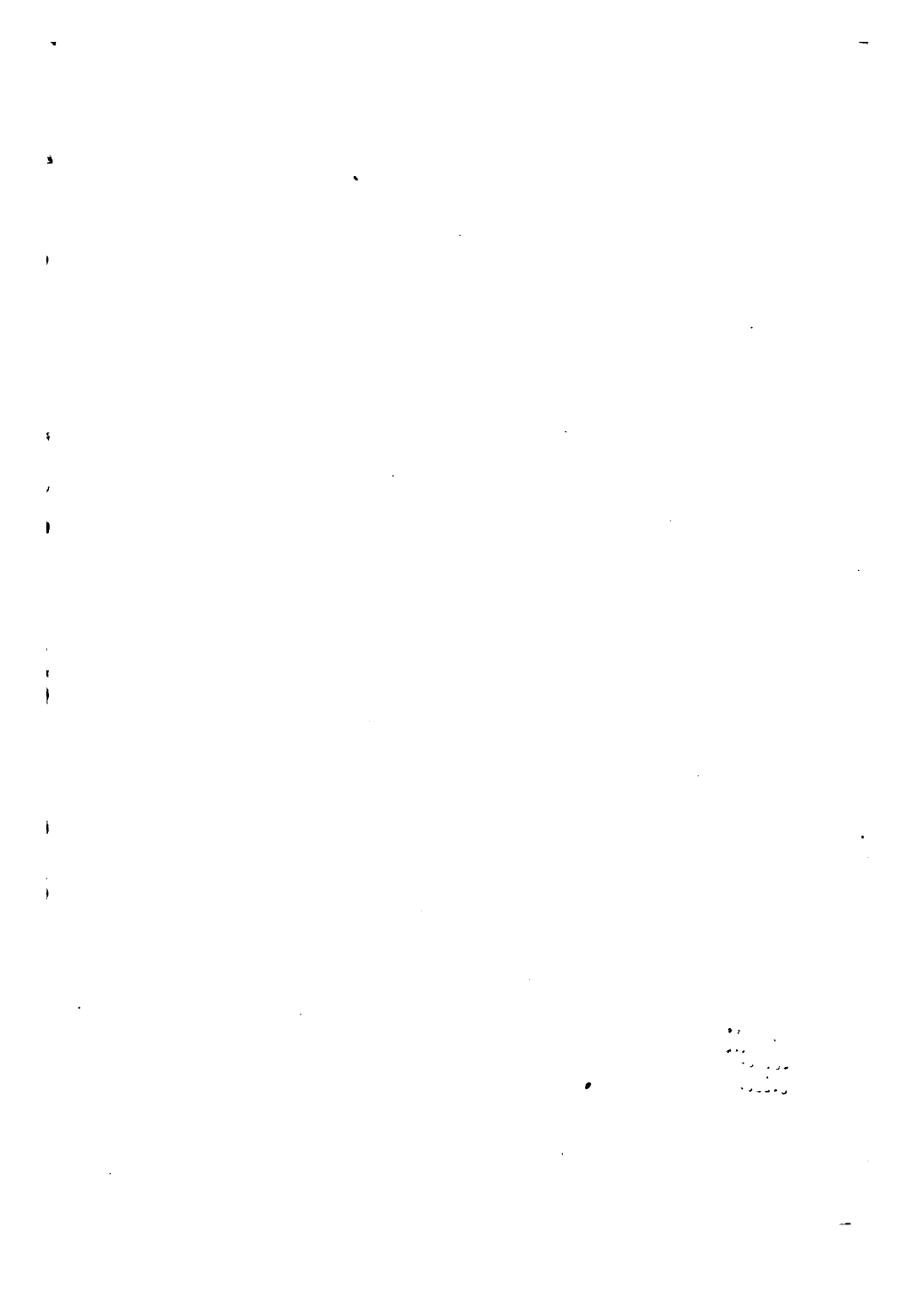


AFTER a long day's railroad journey from Holland I arrived at Calais late one night in the latter part of May, and looked about the big, dim-lit station, questioning within myself how I should find a lodging-place. A clock, whose pointers indicated that it was past midnight, was the only intelligible thing in sight; for all the signs and posters were in French, and only French words greeted my ears. As I knew almost nothing of the language, and still less of its proper pronunciation, it could about as well have been Chinese.

While I was hesitating, in doubt as to what to do next, a group of clamorous coachmen assailed me, each

man intent on rushing me off to his particular hotel. My response in English only served to increase their ardor without contributing a single iota to the information I desired. In the end I would have been compelled to trust my fate to one of them and take the chances of getting accommodations to my liking, had not a railroad porter come up who said he could talk English. From him I learned that a large hotel was run in connection with the station. I knew from experience in England that railroad hotels were generally excellent, and I was rejoiced that there was no need to go farther that night. I extricated myself from amid the disappointed coachmen, who must now return to their various hostelries empty-handed, and followed the guidance of my new friend. He did not leave me till he had seen me to a room in the hotel.

On the following day I met this English-speaking porter again. He was off duty at the time, and when he offered to show me about the town I gladly accepted his companionship. We lingered longest in the older parts. Their gray antiquity was very delightful, and I was especially interested in a tall, weather-worn lighthouse that rises above all the other town buildings on the borders of the market-place. It has outlived its usefulness as a lighthouse, and now serves as a watchtower. Each night, from eleven o'clock on, a lone sentinel looks out on the town from the glass windows





FRIENDS

at the summit of the old lighthouse. Every quarter of an hour he blows a blast on a horn to let the citizens know that all is well, while the end of each hour is marked by four blasts, one blown toward each quarter of the compass. If the watchman sees a fire or anything else wrong, he sounds the alarm by ringing a bell.

The porter and I became quite comfortably friendly on our walk, and I found him intelligent and entertaining. In his broken English he spoke of his fellow-countrymen with great frankness, and his comments on national characteristics were suggestive and enlightening.

For one thing, he said that the relations of the men and women were marked by mutual distrust, and the men in particular are convinced that all women are deceitful and unstable. The porter agreed with the justice of this general verdict on the character of the French women, but palliated their faultiness by observing that it might be the result of the men's "leading on." Still, he did not think the men would lead on if they were not encouraged to do so by the women themselves. A Frenchman likes sentiment, he explained, but responsibility sits lightly on him, and he forgets the most ardent professions and skips from one love to another as fancy dictates.

If the porter was right in his elucidations, the

tender passion as experienced in France, is a sort of frenzy in which the judicial faculties play small part. "When a person is in love," said he, "you do not think — people are not made of wood — you do what the one you love asks. I do what the girl asks; she does what I ask. I have the proof in my own life. There was a girl I loved, but my folks did not approve her. One afternoon I call and she was sick. I sat in her bedroom and we talk, and she say she is discourage. She tell me she is discourage three — four times, and I say in a joke, 'Well, why don't you go kill yourself?'

"Then I look away out the window for a little, and I hear a gurgle. I look back quick to the bed, and the girl have a string around her neck and pulling, and black in the countenance. I jump and take the string away, and say, 'What for you make a fool of yourself when I remark a pleasant saying for the fun?'

"She reply, 'You say to do so!'

"But it was her impulse for the day only. If she had kill, to-morrow she would be sorry for it. That is the way of us. We do desperate attempts by impulse only, and when excited. For the moment we have great heat and much daring. After that we are all gone — no courage, no nothing. You Americans — you different. You no have to get drunk to be revenge. You can wait — you shoot a man in cold blood. Ah, I like that way much the better!"

I was not inclined to accept unreservedly either the porter's rather dubious praise of Americans or his strictures on his own people. It is doubtless true that the French lack the staying qualities of the English race and act more on impulse, yet I saw a good deal of French life in my varied touring that seemed to me as simple and domestic and as honestly affectionate as could be found anywhere.

The people are unfailingly polite — the peasantry no less than the upper classes. Even the accent, yes, and the look of their printed words have an air of suavity that attracts and pleases. In the country districts the people bow when they meet you, and say, "Bon jour, Monsieur." It is a greeting that is given as a matter of course, and you receive it just as surely from the little children and the women as you do from the men, who add a touch of the hat. It makes a very agreeable impression on the sojourner from abroad to be accorded such courtesy and friendliness. Among themselves the exchange of pleasant salutations at meeting and parting is universal. This is true of all classes, from the laborers up; and, besides, every man is given his prefix. That they should "monsieur" the curé and doctor and the stranger is to be expected, but they also, with the same respectfulness, address the butcher, the baker, and the ditch-digger.

It was delightful, yet whether this politeness was more than surface deep may be a question. I sometimes had my doubts of it when I noted how little hesitation the people showed in loading me with their bad money. Belgian, Swiss, Turkish, and other coins are in common circulation in France. They are much like French money in size and appearance, and some of them are good and some are not. Often, when I was buying a railroad ticket, I would see the agent poke over his drawer in what I believed was a search for bad money — depreciated foreign coins which native travellers were, of course, wise enough to refuse — and the more he could inveigle into my change, the better he was pleased. I always felt helpless and at his mercy, for I was usually in a hurry, and I was never quite sure enough about the coins to make my protest prompt and effective. I gradually gathered a pocketful of this poor currency, and knew not what to do with it till I returned to London, where I sold it for what it would bring at a money exchange.

I usually travelled on the railroads third class. This was partly for economy, partly because my fellow-passengers in that class were sure to disclose their impulses with much greater freedom than the wealthier folks who journeyed in the more aristocratic apartments. In England the third-class carriages are, as a



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FRENCH TREES

rule, fairly comfortable, but on the Continent they are so rude that it is something of a hardship to ride in them. They are not much better than one of our freight cars would be with some cushionless benches run across the interior. The occupants indulge freely in smoking, spitting, and loud talking, and the only alleviation within reach is to sit near the front of the coach and keep a window open.

French nature as seen travelling third class is characterized by a very grasshoppery liveliness. The people are extremely sociable; they chat together vociferously, and their talk is nearly always full of joking and laughter. Sometimes their animation runs into boisterousness, and they sing, shout, and gesture. It has been said, "Give a Frenchman a pair of dumbbells and ask him about the weather, and before his answer is finished he will have taken enough healthful exercise to last him all day." This statement may have in it a grain of exaggeration, but it is not very far from fact after all.

When three or four persons come to a station to see friends off, there is almost a riot of affectionate parting. It is not confined to lively repartee, for every one has to be kissed, and French custom allows two kisses to a person, one on each cheek. Kissing and embracing are indulged in on all sorts of occasions with much more publicity than I have ever seen else-

where. Indeed, I thought privacy of any sort seemed to be foreign to the genius of the people.

The loquacity of my railway companions was by no means confined to mere sociability and the exchange of pleasantries. There were serious discussions, as well, and men who did not look at all wise would distil wisdom by the hour with a voluble violence that made my head spin. Let two disputants sit opposite each other, and as their excitement increased they would get their noses together, slap hands, and wave their arms about until they seemed on the point of settling the question at issue with fists and muscle. I confess I was sometimes scared, and was concerned lest they should pitch each other out the windows.

I never saw any one convince his antagonist. The sarcastic shakes of the head and the long-drawn, scornful "Ah-h-h's!" punctuated the wordy duel, and in the end both seemed grimly contemptuous of the other's pig-headedness. Politics was, I believe, most frequently the subject of these contentions. Questions of government policy are discussed in France with peculiar bitterness, and as a result families are often divided, and one-time friends become enemies. Every man takes sides and is a staunch partisan, seeing no sense in any view other than his own; and when an affair has been voted on and for the time being, at least, settled, he still continues as pugnacious

on that topic as if it was to be voted on again the day following.

In my railway journeys I found every one I met friendly, and I never made a request or asked a question that did not call forth the most earnest effort to understand me and put me right. Once in a while some one would try to carry on a general conversation with me, but as our chief dependence had to be sign language, the results were rather discouraging. There was one occasion when a young Frenchman spent half a day in the attempt to tell me about himself and learn who and what I was. I suppose time hung heavy on his hands, for we were on a narrow-gauge railroad, and our train was so leisurely we might about as well have gone on foot. Our talk apparently had the most absorbing interest for my companion, and this interest was shared by the other occupants of the car, who gathered around us and looked on with fascinated attention.

My new acquaintance had in some way picked up a few words of English, and I had at command about as many words of French; but as he gave his English words a French pronunciation, and I gave my French words an English pronunciation, this knowledge was well-nigh useless. It took us so long in our conversation to make connections that my friend finally got out a pencil and a piece of paper, and we tried

writing. Our progress by this method was a trifle smoother. Still, it was nothing to boast of, and I wondered at the pleasure my companion seemed to find in our halting interchange of thought. He would write and then, to see if I understood, would look up at me as raptly as if I had been his sweetheart. Toward the end of our journey he wanted to know if I would correspond with him. Judging from the experience we had already had, I thought it would prove too vast a task, and I tried to tell him, "No," but could not manage the language to refuse gently, and was forced to acquiesce and give him my address.

I was often in trouble through my lack of French in the earlier days of my touring. One odd complication occurred at Rouen. There were two stations in the town, only of this I was unaware, and my baggage was at one, but it was from the other I must take my departure. At the station where I arrived I had fallen into the hands of a blue-smocked porter, who explained the situation, and what I was to do, over and over again; but I failed to catch the idea of the two stations. The porter trotted me around and held excited conversations with various railroad employees, and they all jabbered advice at me. I concluded the gist of their remarks was that I must wait a couple of hours, and tried to indicate that meanwhile I would take a walk about town. I paid



A TYPICAL SCENE IN FRONT OF A CAFÉ

Bluesmock, but he was not satisfied, and insisted on sticking to me. He talked and motioned, and I could see he had some scheme or other in mind for my benefit, but I did not gather the least notion of what it was.

We left the station, and I went in his company along the street until we came to a park where I insisted on turning aside. I sat down on one of the benches. It was a pleasant spot. There were trees and flower-beds, plots of grass, and a rocky little lake with two stately swans adrift on its quiet surface. Several children were playing at the water-side with floating swan-feathers. Other children were running about the paths, and many grown-up folk were sitting on the chairs and benches. I would have been very comfortable there in the shade of the horse-chestnut trees if the porter had let me alone. But he stood before me motioning and exclaiming, and the children gathered around, all agape, looking on. This notoriety was too much for me, and I succumbed, and followed after Bluesmock.

We had just returned to the busy city sidewalk, and my self-constituted guardian was pushing on eagerly ahead, when I noticed a sign in the window of a hotel — “English Spoken.” I stopped and looked after Bluesmock hastening along in full faith that I was at his heels; but I did not know what to do with

him, and I simply let him travel on. I would like to know what he thought became of me, and I have no doubt the story from his point of view would be interesting. At the hotel I got the lacking information about the across-town station and my peace of mind was restored, save for some slight compunctions of conscience with regard to my abandonment of Blue-smock.

The views that I had from the car window in my journeyings in the northwest were very attractive. Along the coast there were sand dunes looming constantly against the western sky, yet with gaps now and then affording a glimpse of the hazy sea, with perhaps a fleet of fishing-boats drifting in toward a town. Sometimes the railroad passed through a region of peat bogs, where frequent groups of men were at work digging out the black bricks of earth and laying them in the sunshine to dry. But these phases were incidental. In the main I saw a land highly cultivated and marked by a quiet pastoral beauty, akin to that of southern England, and yet different. Apparently the ways of the people have imparted to the country an individuality not due to either climate or soil. For one thing, the English and the French differ in their taste as to trees. The former like the sturdy oaks and elms; the latter prefer the slender poplars, and the prevalence of these

trees gives the French landscape a delicacy and a lightness that are very charming.

I noticed that every grade crossing on the railways was guarded by gates, and that when our train swept past there was always a woman standing just inside the gates, with a brass horn in one hand, while in the other she held rigidly erect a stick about which a red flag was wound. This woman is the crossing guard. She and her family live close by in a small cottage, that proclaims itself railroad property by having a mammoth number painted on it. Just before the passing of each train the woman closes the gates, blows a warning on her horn for the benefit of any travellers who may be approaching on the highway, and then gets herself into that petrified attitude of military attention that one observes from the car window as the train flies by her.

At first the French method of guarding crossings seemed perfunctory and ludicrous, but it makes them safe. In our own land our country roads, as a rule, cross the tracks at grade perfectly unobstructed, and when the view is limited by buildings, or trees, or hills, you cannot drive over a railroad without feeling that there are frightful possibilities in so doing.

There was, however, one French railroad regulation that I could not regard otherwise than as a curiosity—the custom they have of starting all trains five minutes

later than the scheduled time. It is supposed that this makes the public more certain of catching trains ; but as all travellers perfectly understand the ruse, they naturally give themselves the benefit of the five minutes, and the gain is nullified.

Of the towns I visited in my early journeying, the most interesting was Falaise in Normandy, in whose ancient castle the cruel King John of England at one time held prisoner his little nephew, Prince Arthur. It was thence the youthful prince was taken to meet his mysterious death—no one knows where or how.

I reached Falaise in the late evening. Several omnibuses were waiting at the station entrance, and I picked out a driver who gave me to understand that at his hotel the folk talked English. With this assurance, I gladly stepped inside his vehicle, and he drove away over the stony streets, far back into the town. I suppose I misunderstood my driver as to the linguistic abilities of the hotel people. He probably only meant to intimate in a general way that at his hotel everything was perfect, for when we arrived not a word could I get out of any of them but French. However, I *parlevou'd* lamely to a well-meaning, middle-aged maid till she caught the idea that I wanted a room ; whereupon she conducted me to an apartment with alacrity, and my trials for that day were over.



MARKET DAY AT FALAISE

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The first thing in the morning, when I came downstairs, I met, in the hallway, the maid with whom I had talked the evening before, and she, very agreeably, motioned me to the kitchen. I expected to get something to eat; but instead, the woman produced some blacking brushes, set a low chair out in the middle of the floor, and motioned at my shoes. She wanted to remove the dust and give them a polishing, and I put a foot on the chair and let her work. I had the feeling I ought to be doing the job myself, but the language presented too great difficulties, and I was helpless in her hands.

I spent most of the day in walking about the village. It was the strangest old place I had ever seen. The crooked lanes and highways ran uphill and downhill at random, and street-walks, dwellings, and public buildings were all of a gray stone, much worn and stained, and indicating great age. Indeed the aspect of the village was so venerable I felt as if it had just been exhumed from the mediæval past; and the people in their quaint costumes and with their antiquated modes of living only served to make this impression more emphatic.

A good deal of sewing, knitting, and weaving was going on in the homes, and when I looked in at open doors, I often saw heaps of cloth and newly made garments. There were women spinning on the old-

time wheels, and men knitting with machines that they ran by hand. The town had known prosperity, but now it was decayed and poverty-stricken; and no wonder, for how was it possible by these out-of-date hand methods to compete with modern machinery?

Falaise, like most French towns, is very dirty. This seemed in part due to the uncleanly habits of the people themselves, in part to the entire lack of any sewer system worthy the name. Sluggish rivulets coursed along the street gutters, and these, clogged with kitchen refuse and street garbage, were equally offensive to the sense of smell and sight.

It was market day, and all the roads from the outer world were enlivened with teams driving in from the country, and by women on foot carrying big baskets on their arms, full of butter and eggs. The market square was crowded with booths and strewn with heaps of vegetables and other merchandise; and the throng of buyers and sellers bargaining there, with a gray old church looking down on them, made a scene full of movement and picturesqueness. The townsmen of the lower classes and nearly all the men from the farms wore loose blue smocks, and the women of the same rank wore white caps that were sometimes of plain cloth and very like nightcaps, and at other times were of lace and elaborately frilled. Boys frequently wore blue frocks the same as the

men, and about half the youngsters wandered around without hats. These costumes were not peculiar to Falaise, but are to be found, with some local variations, everywhere in France.

Through the centre of the town ran a small mill-stream, and here and there along it, among the homes of the poorer people, were washing-places and women at work scrubbing dirty clothing. Each washing-place had a broad, heavy slab of stone on the borders of the stream, shelving down into the water. On this stone the workers kneeled in wooden trays that had high fronts and sides to protect them from splashings. The soiled garments were laid on the stone, rubbed with soap and a brush, and then pounded with wide-bladed wooden paddles. After a final rinsing and wringing out, the clothes were hung up to dry on lines and fences, or, in some cases, on trees and hedgerows.

By following the stream to the borders of the town I came to the ruin of the old castle. It crowns a precipice, and overlooks on one side the clustering town-buildings and on the other a juicy meadow, inclosed by wooded hillsides. King John's murder of the little prince, the story of which is interwoven with that of the castle, was one of the most sombre of old-time tragedies, and I had the fancy it might have cast some sort of blight on the vicinity that would still be per-

ceptible; but it has left no trace behind. Life flows on unruffled in the town, and nature round about is as sweet and peaceful as if the scenes it has witnessed had been gentle and good always.

Rural France as seen in the neighborhood of Falaise and, indeed, everywhere in the northwest, is unfailingly attractive. The slender trees, the mellow atmosphere, the simple ways and primitive dress of its people, all combine to render a country walk a succession of pictures; while to make the acquaintance of a country village for the first time is to have an experience full of delight and pleasure. My own first village was one in the neighborhood of Calais. I was following a roadway across several miles of open plain when I saw, far away to the left, a grove of tall trees, and low amid the foliage I noted twinklings of white walls, indicating that the trees concealed houses. This piqued my curiosity, and I went to investigate. Presently I entered the cool shadows of the grove, and there I found reposed the most charmingly picturesque hamlet imaginable. I would have thought it the only one of its kind in the world, but I learned later that, in its wooded seclusion, with the wide, treeless fields surrounding, it was a typical French village of that section.

Several narrow lanes checkered the wood with their irregular lines, and linked house with house. The

only place where the houses gathered in a close group was in the centre of the grove, where stood a little church, so hidden by trees that you would never suspect its existence from a dozen rods' distance.

Both the barns and the houses, as a rule, had wattled walls of straw and mud, with roofs of tile or thatch. Except for a tarred strip a couple of feet wide around the base, the mud walls were white-washed. They appear very neat when in good repair, but they are so thin that rents are easily made in them, and where the breaks are not repaired promptly the mud keeps dropping away from the straw, the straw decays, and a neglected building soon falls entirely to pieces.

The houses were set at haphazard along the crooked village lanes, usually snug to the wheel-tracks. If a yard intervened, it was pretty sure to be of hummocked and hard-trodden earth, with straw and other litter lying about. The space before the house door looked more like a barnyard than anything else. Often it contained a filthy pool where the green scum gathered. The hens made the yard their scratching place; and the pigs took it for their wallowing ground. Hog-pens and chicken-roosts and stable were right by the door, or even under the same roof as the living-rooms.

The smells were anything but sweet; yet there was so much that was delightful to the eye in the surround-

ings of these human sties, that one was ready to forget the odors and the filth. The village ways were lined by high hedges, and everywhere were rows of tall trees, many of them without a branch until you came to a little tuft at the tip-top. It is the custom in France to let the shoots grow out thickly along the tree-trunks, and as often as they get to be eight or ten feet long, they are clipped off and used for firewood. To do the clipping, a man straps some spikes to his legs to aid him in climbing, and struggles up to the topmost boughs, where he begins sawing off the limbs and working his way downward. The larger sprouts are marketable as bean-poles. All the lesser stuff is tied up in bundles, that sell for about a cent apiece.

In Holland tree-shoots are utilized just as in France, only there the trees are cut short off about a dozen feet from the ground, and the sprouts grow out at the top in a great bushy head. In England, too, material of the same grade is an article of commerce, but the English have still another method of producing it. They let a field grow to brush, and when the brush reaches the required height, it is cut, made into bundles, the same as are the tree-clippings in France, and in like manner sold for kindling-wood. In America, we count all such material rubbish, and burn it as worthless. The effect of the French treatment of their trees is to make each individual tree, in the near view,

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A RURAL BARBER

remind one of a worn-out broom set wrong end up; but in the aggregate, it gives the landscape a peculiar grace and interest.

Round about the little house of worship that nestled among the shadows in the heart of the grove of my first village was a small churchyard, overgrown with rank weeds and grasses. A few of the graves had headstones, and one a slender cross of iron some nine feet high, much rusted, and bearing a figure of Christ minus a head. But most of the mounds were unmarked, or were distinguished by nothing more than slight wooden crosses. The graves were very generally decorated with beadwork wreaths, either laid on the ground or hung on the crosses and headstones. These wreaths were often two feet in diameter—great, strange, artificial rosettes, distressingly elaborate, glittering, and high-colored, and in the centre of the finer ones was an oval space, under glass, in which was a Christ on the cross, or perhaps a bead willow tree drooping over a tomb. A large share of the wreaths had been so long exposed to the weather that they were getting shabby, and the earth beneath them was strewn with their fragments. Funeral decorations in our own country are frequently curious and lacking in taste, but I never have seen anything with us quite so grotesque as these bead wreaths of France.

The village was so quiet, and quaint, and sheltered

that it seemed as though it had fallen into a drowsy sleep that had, perhaps, lasted hundreds of years, in which time the march of civilization with all its changes had left this little spot untouched. The people did not seem very busy — at least, they had plenty of time to visit with each other and to watch me. But I was most impressed with their leisureliness by a hair-cutting scene I witnessed. It employed the energies of a whole family, either as actors or onlookers. There was a small boy who was being shorn, his father who did the clipping, his mother who held him, and his sister, uncle, and grandfather who watched proceedings. It seemed a large force for the work in hand, but I think they all enjoyed it, with the possible exception of the boy.

House doors were open, and I glanced into several of the cottage kitchens. There was little to see — a few scanty furnishings, a great fireplace, and sometimes a colony of chickens picking familiarly about the apartment. Frequently there was no other floor than one of rough, hard-trodden earth, very well suited to the chickens, I thought, but not to the human inhabitants, if they had any aspirations toward cleanliness. The only ambitions of this sort that I discovered were concentrated on the outer walls of the cottages, which were often models of neatness — as white above as white-wash could make them, and as black along the base as

applications of tar would permit. It was springtime, and apparently the height of the house-furbishing season, for in my wanderings about the village I saw women patching rents in the walls with mud; women whitewashing; and one woman, who had finished her work with the brush, was wiping off the spatters that had fallen on the tarred strip below.

When I left the village, I went out of the grove at the opposite side from the one by which I entered, and a short walk brought me to a broad highway. Where the lane from the village joined this highway stood a house built of stone, that looked as if it might be an inn. A good many people were gathered in the vicinity, and as I drew near I saw that a funeral was in progress. The wide front doorway was framed about with white cloth trimmed with green vines and leaves. This gave entrance, not to the room within, but to a little section of it that had been walled off into a white, grotto-like space in which the coffin rested, adorned with many of the queer artificial wreaths of glass beadwork.

In front of the house, in the roadway, stood a group of black-gowned, white-capped women, and beyond them, in a group distinctly separate, were a number of men. Presently a priest with a crucifix and a sexton with a long staff appeared, both in robes and bare-headed, and a short service in the open air was begun at the white doorway.

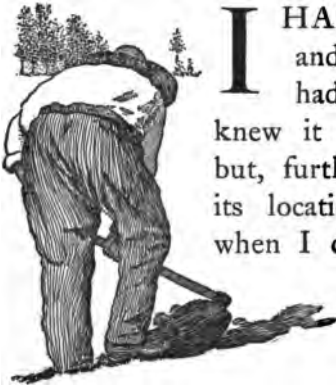
Just then a heavy cart came lumbering along the highway, but it stopped at a respectful distance, and the driver took off his hat and waited with bowed head till the procession formed to go to the grave. The priest, chanting as he walked, led, with the sexton close behind. Then came the coffin, with four women bearers; then several women carrying bead wreaths. The other women followed, and the men brought up the rear.

The heavy cart now resumed its rumble along the highway, but I stayed to watch the procession wend through the green lane and enter the cool depths of the village grove. It was lost to sight at length, the chant of the priest died away, and I heard only a skylark singing in the sunset light far up toward the clouds.



II

THE FIELD OF THE CLOTH OF GOLD



I HAD read about it many times, and the romance of its name had always attracted me. I knew it was somewhere in France, but, further than that, my ideas of its location were very hazy, and when I chanced to learn at Calais that the famous "Field" was only fifteen miles distant, I at once determined to see it, and my spirits experienced an instant uplift. What would it be like? Surely it must be very beautiful with such a name!

Yet, in reality, its claim to the title has nothing to do with the attractiveness of the place itself. The christening occurred nearly four centuries ago, when Henry the Eighth was king of England, and Francis the First was king of France. The latter was anxious to gain the former's friendship against Spain, which

had designs on French territory. Henry, too, had ambitions for a slice of France, but at the moment his inclinations were amicable, and the two monarchs were mutually pleased with the idea of meeting and cementing their friendship. The cementing was to be done, not only by discussion of individual interests, and by treaties solemnly drawn up and sealed, but by revels and pageantry on a grand scale. The kings vied with each other in arranging that the occasion should be superlatively resplendent. All manner of expense and prodigality were lavished on the show, and some of the knights and gentlemen were so superbly dressed that they were said to have spent their entire fortunes in attiring themselves for this one celebration.

1520 The neighborhood of Calais was chosen as a convenient place of meeting, and there, on a broad plain, the two kings came together in June, 1519, and were companions, they and their attendant hosts, in nearly three weeks of merrymaking, that were full of ceremony, gay processions, and all sorts of feats of arms. Sham castles had been built and temporary chapels erected, and fountains ran wine which was free as water to all comers; there were silk tents, gold lace, gilded statues, and a most gorgeous assemblage of lords and ladies; and, finally, magnificent above all the rest, there were the kings and queens of France and England, and the great Cardinal Wolsey. No wonder, with all this

pomp and glitter, that the spot should be known ever after as the "Field of the Cloth of Gold."

As for the outcome of this grand display of kingly affection and interchange of fine words, no one gained anything. It was a waste of energy. The friendship which had been so laboriously and ostentatiously "cemented," proved to be a good deal of an illusion, and very shortly afterward the two kings were at war, each bent on doing as much damage to the other as possible.

I was told that the best way to reach the old meeting-place of the kings was to go by rail to a place called Bellingham, where I would find myself hardly more than a mile from the renowned "Field." On the day I made the journey, I reached Bellingham station at noon. As luck would have it, I alighted from the train uncommonly hungry, and felt I must have a lunch before I started on a tramp that, with its loitering and its asides, might last for several hours.

I supposed I should find a village near the station, but it stood lonely on a wide, cultivated plain. The chances of getting anything to eat seemed slim, and this made me the more ravenous. My only hope lay in the family that lived in the little brick station. This family consisted of three members as I saw it—an old woman, a middle-aged woman, and a young girl, though perhaps I ought to include a goat that was

feeding near by. The girl was moving the goat to a fresh tethering-place when the train came in, but after it left she sat down in the station doorway and occupied herself in petting a maltese cat.

I was observing all these things rather disconsolately, and wondering how, with the few French words at my command, I could make an intelligible appeal for food, when I noticed that, just across the railroad tracks, stood a black little shanty. It had lace curtains at its one tiny window, and on a board tacked up in front was the word "Buvette." I did not know what buvette meant, but my hunger suggested that the building might be some sort of a restaurant. I went over to investigate, and, sure enough, there was a short counter inside, and behind it some shelves adorned with three or four bottles.

The girl in the station doorway had been watching me, and now she left her cat and came running across the tracks and followed me into the shanty. She promptly stepped behind the counter, and when she saw me regarding the bottles on the shelves, she smiled and said something in French. I shook my head. The contents of the bottles may have been entirely harmless, but I was uncertain as to their real nature. I tried to explain what I wanted, but the girl could not understand the kind of French I improvised. Still, by perseverance and the help of the language



ON THE FIELD OF THE CLOTH OF GOLD

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of signs I at length made it clear to her that I would like a glass of milk and some bread and butter.

Her face brightened, and she trotted over to the station. Soon she reappeared, carrying a jar-like pitcher of milk and half a loaf of coarse bread. She said they had no butter and I suspect the milk was goat's milk, but it was very much better than nothing, and I left the buvette a good deal refreshed.

I now started in earnest to seek the Field of the Cloth of Gold. A rough farm road led in what I judged to be the right direction and I followed it until, after a time, I met a soldier in a rainbow uniform. I showed him a paper on which I had the name of the "Field" written in French. We then held a little conversation on the subject. He shouted French at me, and I shouted English at him—for it seems natural to raise one's voice when one is not understood. But we had to give up trying to deal with the subject minutely, and in the end the soldier simply waved his hand around to indicate that there I was right on the spot, and then with polite adieus he strode on his way.

I sought a hillock and sat down to look about. I was on an open, slightly rolling plain—a vast expanse of unfenced green fields, growing to wheat, sugar-beets, and other crops. On this plain, at long intervals, there were little wooded villages whence came the peasant

tillers of the soil every morning and to which they returned every evening. A half mile distant was a public road. It stretched away with endless straightness over the long, low waves of the plain, and this road, as far as one could see in both directions, was lined with an avenue of clean-trunked elms.

Aside from the villages in the groves, and the tree-lined road, and a rude windmill crowning a near swell, the plain was almost unbroken. The sun shone with a dreamy heat, and a light breeze blew that made the grain-fields, in which the slender stalks were just heading, break into green billows. The flies buzzed about me, there were big beetles blundering through the grass, and the air was melodious with bird songs.

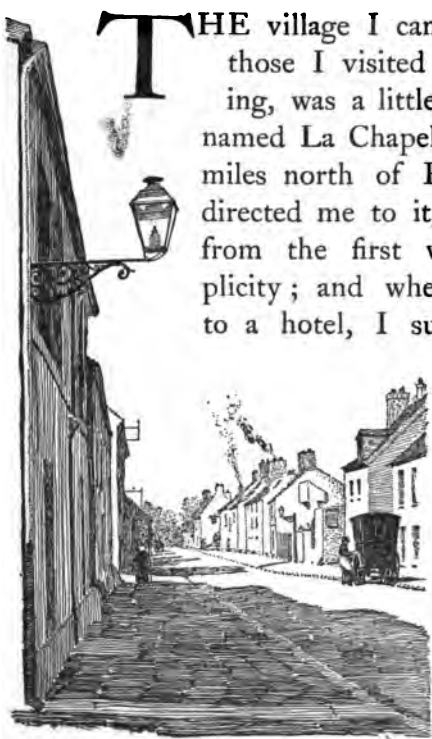
In a near field a man and a woman were hoeing turnips. In another field was a group of a dozen blue-gowned women, all in a line on their knees, weeding. In still another field, not far away, a man was harrowing, and on the borders of the field sat a spectacled old woman sewing. At her side was a basket that I suppose must have contained the family lunch. The prevalence of women on the plain gave it a very domestic air, and this, added to the rustic peacefulness of the scene, made it difficult to realize that right there was held, long ago, what was perhaps the most gaudy and famous tournament the world has ever known. That it should be so tranquil and so like

any other plain was a little disappointing. No monument has been erected or anything whatever done to make the place conspicuous, and such pilgrims as seek out this historic spot find the gentle, undulating farmlands with the golden name wholly in the possession of nature and the plodding peasantry.



III

LIFE IN THE COUNTRY



THE village I came to know best of those I visited in my earlier touring, was a little, old-fashioned place named La Chapelle, about twenty-five miles north of Paris. A friend had directed me to it, and I was charmed from the first with its rustic simplicity; and when, instead of going to a hotel, I succeeded in making

arrangements to board and lodge in one of the village homes, I thought the situation could hardly be bettered.

I was domiciled in what had been, forty or fifty years before, the house of a country doctor.

It was a large, two-story building, standing snug to the street, and joining walls with neighboring houses on either side. From the highway, its appearance was rather blank and forbidding, but as soon as I passed through it to the rear I found the lacking touch of homelikeness. From a vine-clad porch I looked out on a lawn, in which were several flower-beds and a cluster of trees. Slightly farther removed, was the garden, subdivided into many neat little plots of vegetables and small fruits, and beyond the garden were the open fields.

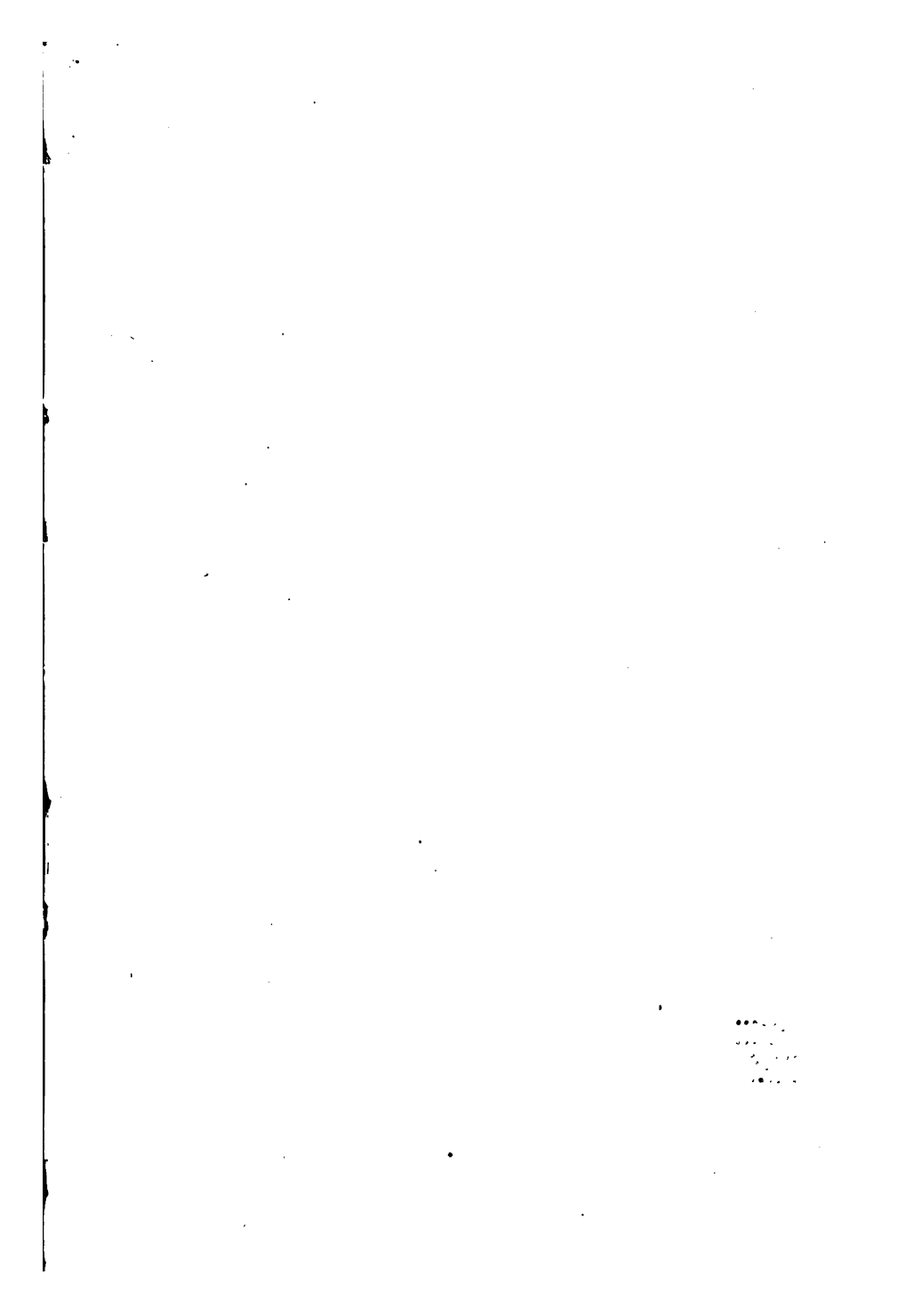
The house was flanked with ponderous wings that in size almost rivalled the main structure. One of these had formerly been the doctor's barn, but now it was used for odds and ends of storage. The doctor had been something of a farmer, and the barn was broad and big and had an expansive roof of mossy tiles. Access to it from the street was had by an arched and paved passage that went straight through the main building.

In the wing opposite the barn, up one flight, I had my room — a room that, in its way, was rather imposing. It was large and high, and had a broad fireplace with a decorative mantel; and above the mantel was a mirror built into the wall and surrounded with elaborately panelled woodwork. Some of the furniture was handsomely solid and interestingly aged, but the room as a whole showed plainly by its barrenness, its

cracked ceiling, and its stained and loosening wall-paper, that its aristocracy was of the far past. The pleasantest feature of the apartment was its one wide, high window. This window opened in halves inward, and it had a balustrade on which I liked to lean and look out on the grassy court and the dull-toned, wavy lines of the old tile roofs, and watch the people of the house, whose work often brought them into view down below.

The house had a number of tenants, all humble villagers, and I came to be very well acquainted with some of them. One of these was a man who always wore a blue apron, and whose only work seemed to be weeding and hoeing in the garden and doing other small jobs about the place. Another was a black-capped, hardy old woman, who, at our first meeting, took great pains to let me know her age. I did not comprehend her clearly until she stooped and wrote "81" with her finger in the dirt of the courtyard path where we were standing. Then she asked how old I was, and I scratched the figures in the path beside hers.

Naturally, the person I saw most was my landlady. She, too, was elderly and black-capped, but she was thin and bent, and did not carry her years as well as the other woman, and she had no pride in them to make her anxious I should know their exact number. She was a very painstaking body, and tried to do





THE POSTMAN

everything she could for my comfort. Indeed, she tried too hard. I was gradually picking up a French vocabulary, but my acquirements at that time did not go far when it came to carrying on an extended conversation. My landlady liked to talk, and, worst of all, she insisted daily on finding out in detail what I wanted to eat. I could not make her understand that I did not much care, and that she could bring what she chose. She must know about each individual thing—did I like it, or would I prefer something else?—and we always had a struggle with the language in making out my bill of fare.

Yet, in spite of all my blundering, I gained something of a reputation as a linguist, for I heard my landlady one day telling a companion that I knew French—I “was not just an ignorant foreigner, oh, no!” I think the reason for this undeserved honor lay in the fact that when my landlady was rattling along in her conversationals, I made it a point to agree with her as nearly as I could. Most of her remarks were quite inconsequential, and it did not matter much what I said. I confined my answers, as a rule, to “Oui” and “Non,” and made a guess at which was right. If my landlady stopped and looked surprised, I hastily changed to the other word, and she would go on satisfied.

She lived in the second story of the main part of

the house, and she brought my meals thence in a basket. From my window I would see her, in her neat black cap, come plodding along the path across the yard to the passage that led from without up to my room, then hear her slowly mounting the stairs, and opening the creaking door. "Bon jour, monsieur," she says, and then follows a patter of small talk, to which I contribute my occasional affirmatives and negatives.

When she had finished spreading the cloth and putting on the dishes, she often groaned once or twice, but I do not know whether that was because she was unwell or exhausted. Quite likely the latter, as it was no small task to attend me, with all that carrying and stair climbing.

For my noonday and evening meals, which were served in courses, she had to make several journeys. First came soup, and then followed meat, vegetables, dessert, etc. Bread was supplied in the form of a loaf that very much resembled a stout walking-stick in length and slenderness. In the morning I had only a cup of chocolate and one lone roll that was crust clear to the heart. This made what the French call their "first breakfast," and it is considered entirely sufficient until noon. Then they have their "second breakfast," which is fairly substantial. But for a good, square meal, from the English and American point of

view, you have to wait until "dinner" in the evening. Still, this regimen is not at all unsatisfactory after one gets used to it, and the food everywhere in France is almost unfailingly well cooked and well served.

The village of La Chapelle lay on what had been an important highway in the days anteceding the railroad, and the houses all gathered as close as they could to this old thoroughfare. The hamlet had no side streets worth mentioning, but extended in a single narrow line, and house crowded house as if each was intent on seeing all the passing traffic. There are no great coaches now, and no equestrians coming and going as in the old days—but there stand the houses just as they were built a century or more ago, elbowing each other in vain expectancy of the return of the ancient hurly-burly on the highway.

The village street was laid with rough paving-stones, over which the ponderous wheels of the loaded carts rumbled with a suggestion of thunder, and with a rude jolting that made the houses vibrate. The walks were as rudely paved as the street, and it was like doing penance to travel over them. You had no comfort till you left the village, when the roads became macadam, and the walks either disappeared or gave place to narrow paths of dirt.

My village of course had its church, and it also had an open square called a "place," which seemed to be

the more important of the two. The former was for religion, the latter for business and pleasure; and the French love recreation and buying and selling far more than sermons and devotions. They are Catholics almost universally, the exceptions being less than one in fifty; but I got the impression that the church was kept up more for the sake of ancestral custom than because the people cared for it. The adherence of many to the dominant faith is nominal rather than real, and most intelligent people dissent in private, at least, from many of the church doctrines. But interest in the matter is languid. They feel that the church—some church—is valuable and necessary, and their idea is that as long as the Catholic Church is not actually working mischief they might as well support it and say nothing.

The priests are nearly always the sons of farmers and tradespeople. They rarely are drawn from the more wealthy and cultured classes. Between the ages of twelve and twenty the boys who plan to go into the priesthood attend a clerical school. Then for a year they are obliged to serve in the army. The army influence has a tendency to counteract that of the period of schooling, and many retire from the ranks of the soldiery to become ordinary civilians. Those who go on and take priestly orders and enter on their life work, usually make their home with rel-





A HOME DOORWAY

atives. In case a priest has no convenient kinspeople, he is apt to live alone, save for the company of a single elderly servant, and if he is poor he takes care of his own garden. Few priests have an independent income, and the stipend from the government, in most instances, is not over twenty dollars a month, though to this must be added the proceeds of christenings, weddings, and burials. The priests visit the sick and needy, and, as a rule, are charitable and benevolent. They confine themselves pretty closely to Catholic reading; their sermons are made on ancient theological models, and they are very unprogressive as a class. To me they seemed an uncanny lot, in their broad hats and long black robes, and I could not but think that their lives were narrow, their intelligence limited, and that they were so bound to an antiquated past as to be less and less fitted for leaders of men in the enlightened present.

The church at La Chapelle was a pleasing little stone building with a graceful spire, but it was crowded in among the houses and there was no churchyard about it set thick with graves and lichened stones. Except in Normandy and some others of the coast departments, the cemeteries are usually outside the villages, and this was the case with the burying ground at La Chapelle. It was a small square plot among the fields, inclosed by a high stone wall. Its iron gates were

kept locked, and they were constructed to bar one's seeing as well as entering. The only way I could get a glimpse in was by mounting a chance hummock by the wall and standing on tiptoe. The view was not beautiful. There were a few small trees, a path or two, some rows of unmarked mounds, and around the borders of the inclosure a number of gravestones decorated with bead wreaths. The place looked as if it was in a strait-jacket, or as if it was a prison-yard from which it was feared the inmates might attempt to escape. I was told that the French authorities have no wish that the burial places should be visited. To them a cemetery is simply the lonely habitation of the dead—a repository of bodies, tombstones, and artificial mementos of beads and wire. You ask for the key—no, some damage will be done; not that they suspect you of evil intents, but without surveillance there is no knowing what might happen. In particular there is fear that the children who possibly may accompany you will hasten the destruction of the unearthly wreaths.

I mentioned that La Chapelle had a little open reserve, or common, called a "place." This was not like its English prototype, the village green, for it was not green at all, but a barren of trodden earth and rough paving. About half of it was shadowed by some rows of trees with tops clipped off at the height of ten or twelve feet. On the "place" the children

played ; there, in the shade, on warm afternoons, the old women loitered with their knitting ; there travelling tinkers and pedlers often stopped with their carts, and there was held the annual village fête.

The La Chapelle fête was in progress at the time of my arrival, and on the first evening of my stay I went around to have a look at it. Several tents and wagons were stationed on the borders of the stumpy grove, lamps had been lit here and there, and the people, their day's work done and their dinners eaten, were beginning to congregate from the village homes. The children were the most eager of the attendants, and they came prepared to spend all their treasure of pennies, which they held tight-clasped in their palms, or, for greater safety, carried in tin boxes where the coins rattled reassuringly until the last one was gone. Many bareheaded young women were present, a few white-capped matrons, all the lads and young men, and now and then an older man.

The merry-go-round, with its double row of little wooden horses, its gold and tinsel and gay colors, and its organ that belched forth music unceasingly, was the great attraction for the children. The organ was played by a man who looked as if turning a crank and eliciting harmony by main strength was hot, hard work. The motive power of the merry-go-round itself was furnished by a man and a boy, who walked

around within the circle of wooden steeds and pushed on the braces. The clumsy mechanism of all this made the roundabout decidedly prosaic to me, but the riders had the gift of forgetting accessories, and to them the whirl on the hobby-horses was clearly airy and exhilarating.

A number of the adjoining tents were simple little booths devoted to the sale of fancy wares, crockery, and toys, but in one there was a shooting-gallery in charge of a young woman. She loaded the guns, and the men could shoot at bull's-eyes, or at clay pipes stuck up in various positions for the purpose, or at some whirling effigies. The marksmen popped away very perseveringly, though I could not see that they were doing any great damage to either the bull's-eyes or the other targets. One of the bull's-eyes was reserved, and if you chose to try your skill on that you must pay an extra price. But, granting that you hazarded the amount charged and that your aim was true, you had the pleasure of having your prowess made known by a monkey, which, under the directions of the gallery-keeper, walked out from a cage behind the target and rang a bell. That duty attended to, he was pushed back behind the doors, and a fresh target set up.

Late in the evening, after the small fry went home, there was to be an open-air dance on the common, but there was no knowing at what hour it would begin, and



A VILLAGE WASH-HOUSE

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I did not wait to see it. When I came away most of the crowd had gathered around a booth where a woman was allowing the people to draw cards with numbers on them from a tin can. This was a lottery, and as near as I could understand, one of the numbers on every card was a prize-winner. Your only difficulty was in selecting the lucky number. The most important drawing I saw made was a large doll. The woman who received it at once retired to the outskirts of the crowd and ran about among her friends, showing her prize with great glee. As a whole, lucky numbers seemed scarce, but there was no lack of eagerness on the part of the ticket-buyers.

In all country communities this annual fête is the most notable merrymaking of the year. It continues through several summer days, always starting on Sunday afternoon. That is the only time in the week when the whole population of the region is at liberty and disposed for recreation, and at no other time would the fête start off so auspiciously. La Chapelle was too small for it to be seen there in all its glory, but on another occasion I was present in a larger village on the opening afternoon. In this case, the common was spacious and well grassed. Around its borders on every side were tents and booths, some for pleasure and some for the sale of food and drink, toys, cheap jewelry, and frail trinkets of all sorts. There were

shooting-galleries, swings, and roundabouts, and a variety of lesser contrivances to induce the populace to exchange pennies for pleasure. In many ways the fête was like an American cattle show or circus. It had the same fakir adjuncts, and the similarity was farther emphasized by the presence of hawking pedlers moving about among the throng, and carrying their stock in trade along with them.

The biggest of all the erections on the common was a great tent, closed in the daytime, but open in the evening for dancing, which would continue to the accompaniment of cornets and fiddles till well toward daybreak. Admission to the tent was free to ladies. Men were charged ten cents to go in, and, in addition, had either to pay five cents every time they danced, or sixty cents to buy in one lump the privilege of engaging in as many dances as they chose.

I saw hardly anything in all the round of the common which had real charm. Some things were commonplace, many were gay or gaudy, and not a few, meant to be clever and humorous, were coarse and offensive. The attraction which drew and held the bulk of the crowd about it was one furnished free by the municipality, consisting of a troupe of acrobats, male and female, who went through a series of contortions and exhibitions of strength, skill, and clownishness for the delectation of the audience. They

performed their antics to the music of a band on an open stage in the centre of the common.

The people were out in force, rich and poor, old and young, men, women, and children. Of all these, the person who made the most impression on me was a black-robed, elderly priest going about benignant and approving with fatherly bows and handshakes. Apart from its all being on Sunday, I wondered if he had no conscientious scruples about the lottery or about various other phases of this vanity fair, which, to say the least, were decidedly vulgar. The lottery in most villages is the main dependence for defraying the necessary expenses of the fête. It is under the management of the commune, and the ticket-selling is in charge of the constable, who, some time beforehand, informs every one what the prizes are to be, and conducts a house-to-house canvass. All public-spirited citizens are interested in making the fair a success, and many of the ladies sell tickets among friends living in other places. The drawing takes place in the big tent on the last day of the fête, at three o'clock in the afternoon, with the mayor and council presiding at the ceremonies. The chief prize at the fête I have been describing was a clock valued at twelve dollars; but much more expensive prizes are offered in some villages.

That the fête should begin on Sunday seems to the

French perfectly natural, for with them the Sabbath is a nondescript day that is divided between work, play, and religion according to individual likings and impulses. Persons who are penurious, or whose crops are in special need of attention, work all day; others play all day; more work half and play half. In certain factory towns the mills close Monday instead of Sunday, and it is a very common custom to make Monday the day off for masons, carpenters, and mechanics. "Holy Monday" they call it; and they recuperate from their six days' labor for some one else by doing one day's work for themselves, or by going on a pleasure jaunt, or, not infrequently, by getting drunk.

The earlier hours of the country Sabbath, as I saw it in the vicinity of La Chapelle, had very much the ordinary week day aspect. There was ploughing, weeding, and hoeing in the outlying fields, the loaded wagons went and came, the anvil rang from the blacksmith's shop, pedlers' carts made their rounds from door to door, and the proprietors of the shops took off their shutters and bought and sold as usual. When the church bells called to service, a good many women and children would wend their way to mass, but the men who responded to the summons were few and far between.

As a rule, the Sunday workers desist at noon, and both they and the church attendants feel free to cele-



SAWING OUT BOARDS BY HAND



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brate for the rest of the day. They go visiting, resort to the cafés, walk or ride, or engage in some sort of athletic sport. In many places, archery is a favorite form of Sunday amusement. Another thing which furnishes great entertainment, alike to those who take part and to those who look on, is a fire drill. A hand engine and a fire company is a very common village institution, and the Sunday afternoon drills are conducted with immense ardor and excitement. The first time I approached one, I thought a riot was in progress, there was such a babel of orders and counter orders, and such a hurry-scurrying about the field in which the crowd had gathered. The apparatus was simple—one or two pairs of wheels, a ladder in sections, some lengths of hose, and a tank into which water could be poured. On either side of the tank were handles, and two men were working these up and down as if for dear life. But I was informed that the participants were not practising for a fire—because they never have fires in the French country, or only at such long intervals that the matter of actual service only enters the minds of the fire-drill enthusiasts as a remote possibility. Frequent fires are an American habit, not European, and the main object which impels the men engaged in these drills to put forth their best efforts is the hope of carrying off the honors in the annual contests with the fire companies of neighboring villages.

So far as they can, the French live out of doors. They take their recreation, eat their meals, and do their work in the open air to an extent that is astonishing to an American. You see the women busied with housework of all kinds in home yards, or on the near street walks. There they sew, get ready the vegetables for dinner, and, in a small way, do their washing. Once I saw a little girl standing on a stool and busied up her mother's hair in the public view quite unconcerned. Indeed, the family life among the peasantry all through my village was much more public than private in pleasant weather.

I early adopted the ways of the people, and though I did not go to the length of combing my hair on the street, I loitered in the open air almost as much as any of them. On the day of my arrival, Madame, the landlady, had set an easy-chair on the flagging by the porch, and indicated that it was for me, and all through my stay I often occupied it in the mild evenings, or in the heat of midday when it was too warm to be comfortable walking in the sun. It was very domestic there — the old woman, my housekeeper, and the other humble workers coming and going, and a cat or two wandering about, swallows soaring and occasionally dipping down and out of sight to their nests in the cavernous barn, songsters trilling in the trees, and sparrows scolding somewhere within hearing. At times

the blue-aproned man appeared with a scythe and cut a few swaths of the grass, which was growing tall and rank and hiding the flower-beds. He found mowing sweltering work, and he only did a little every day, and a good share of what he cut, his wife carried off to the rabbit hutch at the rear of the premises.

Nearly every one in the village had a colony of rabbits in some dark nook about their homes. They were raised for eating, and many families kept them in preference to hens, because they were less trouble, and because they could be housed in more meagre quarters. They required little care, and thrived on the kitchen waste and on grass and weeds brought from the fields or the garden. Then, too, their skins were always salable to pedlers who went about with racks on their backs, or with pushcarts, from door to door, buying them at the rate of a cent or two apiece.

The village street was the most interesting place to see the local life, especially the shadowed side in the afternoon. Some of the villagers brought out chairs, some sat on doorsteps, or on the benches which every house had against the wall near the entrance. There were old women and quaint little white-capped babies, young women and middle-aged women, and there were small boys and girls of all sizes, running about or perhaps lying on the rough paving-stones near their elders. The children were most numerous after school hours.

Then you saw them in and about every doorway, with their dolls and picture-books and other playthings, eating big pieces of bread, jumping ropes, and doing all the other thousand and one things that children delight in.

There was no end of visiting on the street. The people liked to gather in groups, and passers often paused for a word with friends. Doors were many of them open, and windows were conveniently low, with sashes swinging on hinges, and neighbors always found it easy to see and talk with each other, even when domestic duties kept some of them in the house. I rarely saw any of the adults reading. They found their intellectual stimulus in social intercourse; and they would sit by their house doors through the long June evenings and talk, talk endlessly, until the stars came out.

The toddlers whom I saw on the highway were often in charge of their grandmothers. One of these grandmotherly caretakers lived close by my stopping-place. Her charge was a sturdy, rebellious little youngster, whose notions about the dangers of the street differed from hers materially. They were always having contests, and the grandmother's wrinkled, leathery face seemed sharpened by the anxiety of continual watching. She never looked in the youth's direction without telling him to do or not to do something, and

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usually that seemed to rouse his determination to go just contrary to her commands. But what made him maddest was to have her catch him unawares and with her apron wipe his nose. That never failed to set him kicking and squirming in great disgust.

I think, as a rule, the French are very fond of their children and take excellent care of them. The only case of abuse I saw was one day when I met a thin, angular woman on the outskirts of the village, with a baby in her arms and in front of her a weeping little girl whom she was driving toward the hamlet. The woman was screaming in a perfect torrent of scolding, and she was cuffing the little girl about the head so hard as to almost knock the child off her feet. Even this was not enough, and the woman kicked the girl and threw sticks at her. The baby in the woman's arms was crying loudly with fright, and the little girl was wailing too, as she staggered along, blinded by her tears and by her trowsled hair, which had fallen over her face. They turned a corner and disappeared, but they left with me a distressing memory that lingered long and depressingly.

One evening I walked about a mile out from the village along a lonely road that led me past a reedy pond, where the frogs and other weird-voiced water-creatures were croaking, to a little grove in the borders of which a nightingale was thrilling the air

with its varied melody. My road continued into the wood and came to an end in a quiet forest dell, where was a low, tile-roofed shed—the La Chapelle washhouse. It was vacant at that hour, but the door was open, and I went in. A long, shallow basin of cemented brickwork occupied the middle of the structure, and through this flowed a little stream. On either side was space for a dozen kneeling women.

It was a pretty spot and a cool interior, but it was a whole mile from the village, and all that distance the women have trundled their barrows of washing, winter and summer, from time immemorial. There was no stream nearer to the village, and for home use they depended on wells, whence they drew water in wooden buckets by pulling on a rope running over a wheel. A short time previous there had been a project for a system of waterworks, with pipes to every house in the village. The commune had money enough for the undertaking in its treasury, but when the measure was put to vote it was defeated. They always had gone to the wash-house in the grove, and why should they not continue to go? After all, it was only a mile; and they would not spend money on a change which would confer so slight benefit.

Not every village possesses a wash-house, either near or far, and the women do the work beside the streams

and ponds, with no protection from wind or sun, save that given by the lay of the land or by near trees. The washing apparatus usually includes a box to kneel in and keep the worker out of the mud, a paddle, a scrubbing-brush, soap, and a bottle of ammonia to take out spots. In winter, a kettle of hot water is brought also, into which the worker now and then dips her numb hands to restore, in some degree, their warmth. The washing-place has very real charms for the peasantry, and they have no desire to betake themselves to individual wash-tubs in the seclusion of their homes. The attraction lies in its sociability. It is the village newspaper. There you hear all the local happenings, rumors, and opinions. Another reason for clinging to it is custom; for the woman who gets used to washing by the waterside thinks she can wash in no other manner.

At one house where I was visiting, the mistress had travelled and imbibed some foreign ideas, and she tried to get her maid to wash handkerchiefs and other little articles indoors, with a tub on a chair. But the maid declared it was impossible. Her mistress insisted she would not have the maid running all the time to the washing-place, and finally they compromised. The maid would do the washing at home, but she must take it out on the lawn back of the house and get down on her knees, or she was

sure she could never do it at all. I remember seeing her, the day of my visit, carry out her little tub and kneel before it on the grass, and I heard her crooning a peasant ditty as she scrubbed, apparently quite contented.

Of the villages neighboring La Chapelle, I liked best one called Orry, hardly ten minutes' walk distant. It did not lie on a main highway, and was built at random along crooked paths and lanes. For its public features there was a tile-roofed church, a common bounded with rows of squat trees, and a pool in the heart of the hamlet, about which the swallows liked to flit, making swift dips along its surface and sometimes alighting on its margin to get mud for nest-building. The water was stagnant and brown, and was the home of vast numbers of pollywogs, waterbugs, and wigglers. Yet it was the drinking-place of the village cows and horses, and the creatures seemed to like it. The cows would wade far in, and take deep draughts in evident enjoyment. The beverage was surely rich and soupy, but I had my doubts about its improving the flavor of the milk.

On the village borders, where two roads met, was a stone cross, shadowed by a cluster of poplars. Crosses are to be met with almost everywhere in France, but they are much more numerous in the remoter sections than near Paris. As far as I

noticed, no one paid any attention to them, yet I was told that, while few besides the priests offered a conspicuous obeisance, all good Catholics made the sign of the cross when they passed one, though in so quiet a way — a wave of the hand, a touch over the heart — that you would not observe it unless you were watching closely.

The sight that was to me most curious in Orry was two men in a lumber yard sawing out boards. They had a log poised up in the air on a slender framework, and one man stood on the log and the other on the ground below, each grasping the handles of a long saw which they pushed and pulled back and forth as it cut its slow way through the wood. I had the impression that sawing boards by hand was no longer a practice except in very out-of-the-way regions, but in France a great deal of lumber is still worked up by the hand-sawyers.

The region round about Orry and La Chapelle was characteristic French country — wide, cultivated plains with a frequent dotting of snug farm hamlets, each so environed by trees that, as viewed from the fields, it appeared to be built in a grove. On our side of the Atlantic villages are comparatively loose and straggling, and neighborless homes on the lonely country roads are to be found in every township. But such homes are exceptional abroad; and France is everywhere

reminiscent of the days when, for mutual protection, the people were obliged to gather in close village groups if they were to exist at all.

The bare monotony of the plains in contrast with the village groves is suggestive of a desert broken by green oases. But the resemblance is not complete, for there are nearly always within the range of vision several poplar-lined roadways. The trees are planted and cared for by the government. They stand at uniform intervals, and the periodical trimming off of all the side branches makes their slender, tufted forms, when seen from a distance, seem like some mysterious arboreal troops marching in double columns across the country. Twenty years from the time of planting the trees reach maturity, and attain a value of four dollars each. After they are cut, other trees are set out in their places—sometimes poplars, but more often, at present, fruit trees, as the latter bring the government quicker and larger returns.

The roads which these tree-avenues lightly shadow are, I suppose, the finest in the world. They are often marvels of regularity—smooth as a floor, no loose stones, no gravel or depressions, and they are even curbed along the sides. They are as much better than American macadam as that is better than plain earth.

In the checkered fields about La Chapelle, the farm work was going forward all day, and practically every

day, from early dawn to late evening. The men did the heavier work, such as ploughing and carting, while the women, at this season, were mostly engaged in planting, or in a warfare with the weeds. Sometimes the laborers worked in family groups, sometimes singly. In one field you might see a man ploughing or hoeing alone; in another, there might be father, mother, and children; in still another, you would find half a dozen women moving in a martial line through a wheat field and cutting out the thistles. If it was the right time of day, you would be pretty sure to come on some men cutting for fodder a load of crimson clover, luscious and heavy, and just reaching its prime of ruddy, deep-colored bloom. Here is a potato field, and a man and a boy busy planting. The man has a broad-tined hook which he jabs into the earth and opens a crack wide enough for the boy to toss in a potato. Then he drops the earth back into place and steps forward for another jab. The boy, with a big basket of potatoes suspended from his shoulder by a strap, walks backward, and the two do the work quite rapidly.

Asparagus was a favorite crop in this region, and there were sometimes acres in a single field. One such field I noticed was in the care of two young women. They spent their whole time there, Sundays and all, cutting the stalks for market and hoeing out

the weeds., Their hoes were the most clumsy affairs imaginable. The handles were mere stubs, so short as to compel the workers to bend almost double; yet that was the sort of hoe used all over France. I sometimes tried to explain the virtues of our American hoes, but the farmers could not be convinced that their lightness and length of handle were desirable. They wanted something heavy and strong, and the handle must be short, else the laborers would be so far from the weeds that they would escape their eyesight, and the work not be half done.

The asparagus field in charge of the two young women showed no signs of having any crop on it, for they cut the sprouts as soon as the heads appeared above the earth. To get length of stalk they dug down ten or twelve inches into the ground. All except the tip is so bitter and tough as to be uneatable, but the stalks look very white and nice, which seems to be the main point with the French buyers. The asparagus girls, or rather one of them, often had the help of a young man from a neighboring field. She whom he assisted, however, did not begin to keep up with the other girl as long as he staid. The trouble seemed to be a mutual affection, with an accompaniment of fond looks and chatter and embraces, — and who ever knew lovers in one another's company to make haste?

When the midday Angelus rang, all the field-workers left their tasks, either to tramp back to the village or to seek the nearest shade, and I saw nothing more idyllic in all my travels than some of the family groups — father, mother, and children, and perhaps grandparents, lunching together in the heat of the day, under the trees among the open fields.



IV

THE EDGE OF A FOREST



WHEN I left La Chapelle, I went to spend a short time at Coye, another little village a few miles distant. I lodged at a small inn, and my meals, morning, noon, and night, were served in the yard—a parklike inclosure screened from the highway by a thick hedge. Just inside the hedge was a row of young trees with their tops cropped off, so that they had thick heads of branches, and cast heavy shadows down on the tables set below. My table was built to encircle one of these trees, and was in a corner of the yard where lines of hedge reached out around a gravelly square of earth. Thus I had to myself a little green room in the open air. There were several of these leafy alcoves in different parts of the yard, but most of the outdoor business of the establishment was done next the house,

under a spread of canvas that slanted down from the building like a broad piazza roof. Beneath this shelter were three or four long tables, with rude benches to match. There the village folk liked to sit, and clink friendly glasses, and drink their wines. It was in the evenings and on Sundays that they loitered at the tables most and longest; and, at such times, dirty packs of cards were likely to be produced, and game after game played for penny stakes.

Coye lay on the outskirts of the Forest of Chantilly, and it was the forest which gave me the most pleasure during my sojourn; yet there were occurrences in the village itself not without interest. For instance, Sunday, I happened to be out on the street early in the afternoon, and was made aware that something unusual was going on by seeing a group of people fastening several white sheets up on a wall. This done, they trimmed the sheets with flowers, and in front of them improvised an altar out of a table, on which they arranged candles and more flowers, while below, on the ground, the table was flanked with many potted plants. Farther on up the street was another of these wayside altars, made in much the same manner.

Later in the afternoon, I noticed that the townspeople were resorting to a vesper service at the church, and I followed. The congregation on this particular

occasion was largely made up of young girls dressed in white, the older ones enveloped from head to foot in voluminous, gauzy veils. Far up in front were the clergy with their robes and the altar with its decorations and color, and, beyond the altar, a triple stained-glass window, through which faint rays of rainbow-hued sunshine filtered. There were kneelings and risings, the rumble of the organ, Latin chants, the tinkle of bells — and at length it was over, and every one came out into the square before the church, where the pavement was meagrely strewn with horse-chestnut leaves. A procession formed, and, with numerous banners and streamers, marched singing down the street to the first altar.

It was a children's procession, in which the girls were most prominent. The smallest of them were bareheaded, and wore circlets of daisies in their hair, and they had quantities of flower petals in little baskets on their arms and scattered them in bright handfuls, right and left, all along the line of march. There were two companies of larger girls — a junior company, the members of which had been first communicants a few weeks before; and a senior company, composed of those who had taken their first communion the year previous. The latter would not again put on the costumes they wore that day, unless it was to attend the funeral of a mate.



HOUSEWORK ON THE SIDEWALK

The gorgeously robed priest conducted a short service before the altar, with its candles burning dimly in the sunlight, while the children stood in regular order about, and a straggling crowd, mostly of women, looked on at a little remove. Presently the procession moved on to the second altar, where the ceremony was repeated, and then it returned to the church and disbanded. The affair was ended, the wayside altars were promptly dismantled, and nought remained to mark their places but a pavement strewn with shrivelling leaves and gay flower petals, which some of the street urchins were curiously picking up. Formerly much more was made of the ceremony of the Holy Sacrament, and the house-residents put up many altars all over the village, and the street was strewn thickly with flowers from end to end.

The annual inspection of horses occurred the next day on the square near the church, and the spot looked for the time being like a horse-mart. Every village steed was obliged to present itself—farm-horses, saddle-horses, and trotters—there were no exceptions; for the government must know exactly what there was to draw from in case of war. A squad of soldiers did the inspecting. They had a desk and books and papers in the shadow of a building, and the horses were, one by one, led before them to be measured and otherwise critically examined. Often they

ordered the creatures to be trotted up and down to show their paces, and no animal left the square until a record had been made of its capacity and characteristics.

One afternoon, a few days later, a wedding party came to Coye. It included enough people to fill half a dozen or more coaches and omnibuses. They all alighted at one of the inns, and took possession of the tables in the garden, and every individual seemed to be in a whirlwind of haste to get something to drink. They ran hither and thither, and I never saw a crowd of peaceably disposed folk so excited. All the villagers who lived near came and looked on at the riot from the garden borders, eager to witness the tumult, and anxious to get a view of the bride and groom.

In France a marriage must take place before the civil authorities to be valid. The ceremony before the priest does not count except as a matter of sentiment. But all true Catholics ignore the civil marriage as far as possible. The necessary formalities of the ceremony before the village mayor at the town hall are gone through very quietly, and all the display is made at the church wedding. The latter takes place at morning mass, and at the close of the services the members of the wedding party resort to one of the village hotels and have a feast. Then they all pile into carriages and omnibuses, and go for a ride. At some convenient place they stop for liquid refreshment, and

later return to the home village and feast again at the hotel. Afterward the dining room is cleared and they have a dance which continues till midnight.

Next day, at noon, the same party comes together once more to feast. The ride and the other pleasures are repeated, and the day ends, as before, with a dance. Sometimes the jollity extends over a third day, with the same programme. The expenses are shared between the families of the bride and groom.

During the festivities the bride always dresses in white and wears a long veil, and the groom, if he can afford it, buys a dress suit and a stovepipe hat for the occasion. It is the custom for the wedding guests to give presents, but, while these often mean a considerable outlay, they do not run into the burdensome extravagance which characterizes those of many American weddings. Really wealthy couples go on wedding trips more or less extended, while the poorer folk, who cannot even indulge in the middle-class luxury of a ride, simply go for a walk.

While I was at Coye one of the village shopkeepers died. The church bell tolled at intervals all the day following the night on which he passed away, and by the amount it tolled the neighbors knew whether the family was to pay for a first, second, or third class funeral. Until the body was taken from the house, candles and a crucifix were kept standing on a table

near the remains, and some of the friends sat and watched through the night. On the day of the funeral the constable made a tour of the village and gave notice from house to house of the hour of the ceremony.

Eleven o'clock in the morning was the time appointed. The funeral was largely attended, and nearly every one was dressed in black. The last arrivals were the priest and a company of white-robed choir-boys carrying a bier. On this the coffin was borne from the house and slid into a hearse which was in waiting. The hearse had open sides, allowing the pall to drape out over the wheels so that the corners could be carried by the pall-bearers. Many great bead wreaths were now brought from the house and hung all about the top of the hearse, and other mourning emblems of the same sort were set along the sides of the coffin. When these details had been arranged the choir-boys after some private squabbling among themselves, took up the empty bier and marched off, and the priest and his assistant followed; then came the hearse, and behind that, in a straggling march, the rest of the company. From doorways and from every side lane, little groups of curious lookers-on watched the procession as it wended its way to the church. There it paused for a short service, and then continued to the cemetery on the hamlet's outskirts. After the final

rites had been observed, the nearest friends retraced their steps to the village centre, where at the house of a sister of the deceased, they were provided with a dinner that in its generous quantity of food and drink, was decidedly more festive than funereal.

I made the acquaintance of a family living near my hotel who, for a good many years, had been residents of America. Monsieur and Madame Cezilly, before they retired to spend their last days in their mother country, had a store on Broadway, in New York. They had begun their career in America very humbly, worked hard, spent little, and they both constantly attended to business. Their trade grew, and their profits were every year larger, and at last they carried back to France a comfortable fortune. They sometimes regretted that they had not kept on in their New York store, and I fancy those active, successful years in America are the happiest they will ever know.

I was often at the Cezillys' to lunch, and sometimes I went for long rides with them across the country or through the Forest of Chantilly, which was so near that you were in it at once when you passed through a door at the foot of the Cezilly garden. The part of the forest in which Monsieur Cezilly was just then most interested was a newly cleared tract where he had bought some wood. We visited this section one day on a forest ramble. The land was not entirely denuded,

but the trees had been very much thinned out. Nothing was wasted, and no stumps were left. The tree-trunks were all cut off at the surface of the ground, and in the case of the larger ones the choppers dug about them and severed the roots instead of the trunk. The smaller trees and the larger branches were cut into cord-wood lengths, split and neatly piled, and all the brush was bound into bundles. Lastly, the chips and other odd bits were picked up, loaded on wheelbarrows, and piled here and there in big heaps. It was certain of these heaps that monsieur had bought, and after he had looked them over critically we went on, and entered one of the forest roads.

This road was unlike anything I have seen elsewhere. Every out-thrusting twig and branch on either side had been cut off, so that you walked between perpendicular walls of thick leafage. All the other forest roads and byways were the same. They were the more striking because they continued long distances without a turn, and the view down the diminishing perspective of these deep green channels sunk in the woodland, was quite enchanting. The forest was a vast network of such ways, and you could never go far without finding others crossing or parting from the one you were following. Indeed, they were so numerous and so much alike that, unless you were very familiar with the forest, you were sure to get lost in the woodland labyrinth.

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A FOREST-KEEPER

After visiting a little lake in a forest hollow, and lingering on its shores for a time, we turned homeward. We took a more travelled way than the one by which we came, and on it met several carriages and horseback riders, and a tall, blue-frocked gamekeeper stalking along on foot, with a cane in his hand and a canvas bag at his side. Where the forest road joined the highway on the borders of Coye village, the passage of all teams was blocked by a heavy rail, supported at either side by a stout post. Every road entering the forest was guarded in like manner. Only persons who possessed keys, rented from the authorities at one dollar a year, were permitted to drive in the forest, and each time they went in or out they had to alight, unlock and push back a bar, and then replace it after the team had passed. In this and in other ways the government takes great care of its woodlands, and all the officials in the forestry service go through a systematic training before entering on their duties. They are instructed in every subject connected with the culture, preservation, and replanting of forest — the last of paramount importance. When a tract is cut over, it is methodically restored to woodland, while the destruction of trees is prohibited or restricted by law.

The humble folk of Coye were largely dependent on forestry for their livelihood, and I rarely went far in the woodland without hearing the sound of their axes.

I liked to watch the workers in the lightly-shadowed, cut-off lands, splitting and piling cord-wood, and the men with great broadaxes, squaring the logs. At that season the woodmen were not felling any trees save the young lindens which had been left standing in last winter's forest clearing. Their value lay chiefly in their bark, and they had been spared that they might be cut when they were sappy and easily denuded. The ground behind the workers was strewn with white poles and long, hollow strips of bark, and a scattering of branches full of withering green leaves. All the bark would later be cut into four-foot lengths, and carried down to a pond-side near the village, where it would be soaked and slit into narrow filaments. Much of the slitting and the sorting over afterward was done by girls and women, sitting under a row of poplars on the edge of the pond. By working from four in the morning till deep dusk, at nine or ten in the evening, an expert hand could earn sixty cents a day. When harvest time came, the linden strips were sold to the farmers, and used for binding their sheaves of grain.

Of all the folk I met in the forest, the most picturesque were a party of gypsies. They had established themselves near the edge of the woodland, with the open fields not far distant, and their two carts were drawn up by the roadside, and their two lean horses were fastened to a gate of one of the forest ways. One cart

was painted green, with brown trimmings. It had several windows, and there was a stovepipe sticking out of the roof. The second cart was a poor affair, with nothing but holes in place of windows. A yellow dog, chained to a wheel of the first wagon, was busy beneath it licking out a pan. From the appearance of the roadside, you would think a wreck of some sort had occurred there. It was strewn with dubious looking bedding, harness, baskets, a broken chair, and a variety of battered cooking utensils.

The inhabitants of the wagons were an old woman, a man and wife, and six children. Two of the latter were absent when I first happened on the caravan, but they soon appeared — two little girls, with ragged dresses hanging to their heels and stringy hair falling over their faces. They brought with them a bag full of grass, which they had cut for the horses with sickles by the roadside. I had stopped to try to hold a little conversation with the man. While we talked, I sat on a convenient hummock slightly aside from the wheel-tracks, and the children came and lay down in front of me and looked on, and one of the little boys knotted a wisp of grass in a curious way on the end of his nose, making that feature look very like a big wart. The mother presently relieved me of a part of the audience by calling to her one of the small girls. Then she sat down on the ground, and had the child

stand between her knees while she investigated the little one's head and combed her hair.

Now occurred a diversion. A little bird that could not fly dropped down into the road from some nest up among the tree branches, and fluttered away into the brush. Immediately the gypsies were all on their feet, and the man and the six children promptly gave chase. The one little bird had no chance against so many, and they soon caught it and killed it. I suppose they would eat it later, though such a mite of a thing could not go far in so large a family. The episode was to me disheartening in its savagery. My sympathies were entirely with the bird, and I came away with no desire to pursue my acquaintance with the gypsies further.

The most enjoyable trip I made while at Coye was a drive with the Cezillys clear to the heart of the forest. I had already noted a certain architectural aspect in the forest paths and roadways, and it was quite in keeping to find at its very centre a little open, perfectly round, and a dozen or fifteen rods across. In the middle of the open was a broad circle of lawn, graded into a slight mound and capped with an enormous stone table. When there is a great forest hunt a big tent is erected to cover the whole lawn, and in it the French aristocracy, with divers princes and potentates from abroad, have splendid feasts, and the

noblest of the guests gather around this huge slab of stone. But the spot was deserted and quiet at the time my friends and I visited it, and we chose to do our feasting in the shadows bordering the woodland. We spread blankets and cushions from our vehicle, and spent an hour in leisurely lunching and chatting, while our horse, relieved of its harness, ate its oats and then wandered about, nibbling here and there, and even venturing to crop the grass on the sacred central lawn, that had been trodden by no less a person than the Prince of Wales.

The forest was not at all wild. It was more suggestive of man's handiwork than of nature's. From where we were, at its centre, twelve roads struck off each at the same angle and pursued a perfectly straight course as far as the eye could reach. They were like so many spokes starting from the central hub of a gigantic wheel. If you had no other view than this of the forest you would think it entirely lacking in variety; yet it had many pleasant nooks and dells where you could get entirely away from the conventionality of these main arteries. In one such we stopped on our way home. It was an open glade in a ravine through which wandered a marshy stream. We all got out, and we loosed the horse's check-rein and let him munch the roadside grass. Our dog, meanwhile, had run into a reedy pool near by to cool

himself; and then appeared a keeper — an inexorable minion of the law—and said the dog must not be allowed such liberties—he would frighten the water-fowl — and, furthermore, he warned us not to let our horse graze by the roadside. That grass was a perquisite of his own.

The keeper seemed rather overpunctilious, yet the forest guardians are obliged to be alert, and in spite of all precautions, the tendency is for game to grow more and more scarce. There are too many hunters and poachers. The forest includes nine hundred thousand acres, and almost the whole of it is let to sportsmen in plots of various sizes at an annual rental of four dollars an acre. In its use as a hunting-ground it has its main value, though this income is largely augmented by the sale of the undergrowth, which is cut off in sections once in ten or fifteen years, and by the disposal at longer intervals of the full-grown trees.

Monsieur Cezilly with two other men rents four hundred and ten acres. The shooting season begins the first Sunday in September and continues into the next spring, and during that time monsieur and such of his friends as take pleasure in the sport spend many a day on his woodland reservation. The only time in the season that they are not allowed to hunt is when there is snow on the ground. It is the desire of every true sportsman to kill to any extent compatible with having the pleasure of killing prolonged right

through the year, but in snow time they could track the game so easily that the hunt would not be "sport," but slaughter, and they would shortly destroy all the game in the forest. Hence the prohibition.

Monsieur has a little cabin there in the woods, and he and his guest, fortified by the appetizing lunches madame puts up for them, are quite comfortable, whatever the weather. They never fail to replenish the home larder on their return with more game than the Cezillys themselves can eat, and the surplus is disposed of by sending it as presents to friends.

The first year monsieur had this hunting-ground, he killed three hundred red squirrels on it, and they have not been very plentiful since. They eat the game-birds' eggs, and are regarded as a pest to be exterminated. Sometimes monsieur kills a fox, but the usual game is rabbits and pheasants.

The expense of the hunt is not, by any means, all included in the rental. In the first place, you cannot even carry a gun without buying each year a permit. Then you have to feed your pheasants, just as if you were keeping a henyard. Monsieur Cezilly and his two coadjutors have to pay a man to go daily to strew corn and leave water in the forest paths. In the spring more or less pheasants are bought for breeding purposes, at six dollars a pair, and later they purchase, at a round price, a good many young birds. Where

the shooting borders cultivated fields, the hunters are liable for any damage their game does to the crops. Some farmers purposely plant cabbages and other vegetables near the woods to draw the rabbits out. Then, at the end of the year, they send in their claims for damages. To save trouble and expense of this sort, the renters often run a wire-meshed fence along the exposed boundaries of their shooting to keep the rabbits in.

The game preserves suffer a good deal at the hands of poachers. These gentry are fined and imprisoned if detected, but it is not easy to catch them. Pheasants are their favorite game, and they do their shooting mostly on moonlight nights or just at daybreak. They usually dispose of the birds at some public house, the landlord of which has a shooting permit, so that he can easily account for any birds he sells or has in his house by saying that they had come out of the forest, and he shot them on the village grounds; or he can say he bought them of some one who rents a hunting-tract in the forest, and who had killed more birds than he wanted for his own use. A few years ago a poacher was shot and killed by the forest keepers; but the stealing continues in spite of all the hazards.

Among the rest of the conditions applying to the forest hunting, the renters must keep strictly within



THE CHOPPER



their own boundaries in their shooting, and they must not kill the deer. Hunting the deer is reserved for the pleasure of the great aristocrats of the land. The Duc de Chartres is master of the stag-hunt, and, on such days as are appointed for that sport, a grand cavalcade of men and women starts out from his mansion, in the town of Chantilly, and wends its way into the forest. Accompanying this gay procession are forty or fifty big hounds, a dozen or so to a pack, held in leash by their keepers. Among the dogs is one more clever than any of the others — a master hunter — and when the company approaches the deer, this dog is loosed, and singles out one of the stags from the herd, and starts him running. Then the other dogs are released, and the chase is on. The hounds bay, the hunters gallop pell-mell along the forest ways and across the clearings, and there are shouts and laughter and bugle-calls.

If the stag does not give the hunters a long run, there is keen disappointment. A race of less than two or three hours is not a success from the sportsman point of view. In case the dogs bring the deer to bay too soon, they are called off, and the creature is given a fresh start. The hunt is not without its mischances, and often the stag turns on the pursuing hounds, and rends those that come within reach of its sharp antlers, and, it may be, kills some of them. When the deer is

thrown down by the pack, a keeper runs in among the dogs, and kills it with a sword-thrust.

But most often the deer meets its fate in one of the little forest lakes which, sooner or later, its thirst impels it to seek. Into the water it plunges, and the dogs follow, and no matter in what direction it turns, the savage hounds block the way. Now the master of the hunt puts out in a boat, and manœuvres to get in a position where he can shoot without danger to the people looking on from the near shores. The report of his rifle rings across the lake, the stag floats lifeless on the water, the hunters' horns blow merrily the announcement of the creature's death, and the body is dragged to land.

If the antlers are very fine, with many branches, they are cut off for a trophy to decorate the home of some favored one among the hunters. Of the venison, the gentry get no share. They hunted for the elation of the sport; and, besides, the meat of the frightened and heated creature, after its long run for life, is not very good. The keepers appropriate a few of the best cuts, and the hounds, which hitherto have been restrained in their frantic efforts to get at their quarry, are loosed, and they fall on the body, and tear and crunch and fight in a barbaric feast that leaves scarce a fragment or a bone behind. Then the noble gentry's cup is full, and the lords and ladies come for-

ward and make obeisance over the spot where the antlered deer lay a few minutes before, and some add a kiss of the hand to their bows and courtesies. This done they canter leisurely homeward through the forest, happy in the success which has crowned their efforts to kill the deer after a properly prolonged chase.



V

CHILD LIFE



TO gain more definite insight into the life of the French children than was obtainable by casual acquaintance with them gathered in my flitting travels, I took advantage of the first convenient opportunity to visit a country school. Children get their character and future bent primarily from their home environment, but their lives are also largely influenced by the schools they attend, and whether these are good or bad is a matter of vital importance. The French schools have, of late, been entirely separated from the Catholic Church, both in their teaching and in their teachers. So far as I could judge, the change had been very beneficial, for in France, as elsewhere, denominationalism,

of whatever sort, in elementary education, seems to sap the vitality of the work done as a whole.

The school I visited was in a fair-sized village in the northern department of Oise. I went into the boys' school first. They had a building to themselves, and were in two rooms of different grades, twenty or thirty in each apartment. The rooms were high, well lighted, and in good repair, and the walls were hung with maps and a variety of other helps, interspersed with a number of pictures. On shelves and in cabinets were books, objects of interest in natural history, a collection of minerals, and sets of models to illustrate metric weights and measures and geometric shapes. In front of the master's desk was a small organ. The scholars' desks were the rudest part of the educational equipment. They were long and unpainted, with benches to match, each intended for about half a dozen occupants. The worst of it was that the benches were backless, and the desks behind not near enough to furnish any relief.

The children ranged in age from seven to thirteen. Most of them wore frocks that came down nearly to their shoe tops, and that looked very like dresses. The frocks were usually black, but in some cases were a checked blue. They protected the clothes and were serviceable and sensible; and they were so much the fashion in the boy world of the region that

children of well-to-do parents were as anxious to wear them as those of the humbler classes. Another custom in apparel was that of wearing knickerbockers and short stockings which failed to make connections, by several inches, just below the knee. If only the bare tract had come square on the knees instead of below, one would have to concede that it saved wear and tear of clothing at a most vulnerable point, but as it was, I could not see that it had any advantage whatever.

The scholars seemed to apply themselves diligently to their tasks, and the master said they liked to study at home. By the time a boy gets to be nine or ten, he thinks it important that he should have a portfolio in which to carry his belongings to and from school. The portfolio is black, and it has a long strap to go over the owner's shoulder; and when he first comes into possession of one of these insignia of scholarship, he feels he is a genuine student, as he never has been before. Portfolios of the same pattern are carried very commonly by professional men in the large towns, and they therefore possess a certain manliness in their attributes that makes them far more essential to the boy mind than does the mere matter of use. Indeed, this portfolio is considered by the youths of a good deal more consequence than a hat. Many of the children went to school without the latter article; and, as there

appeared to be no place reserved for hats in the school building, one might infer that the government regarded head protection for students with disfavor. Such hats as there were had to be hung on chance wall nails, or tucked into niches about the desks.

The master and his family lived in the school building, and a door opened from the main schoolroom into the family kitchen. A visitor was unusual; and when I came in, the master's wife and daughter looked through the door from the kitchen to see who the stranger was. I thought the combination of domesticity and education in such close and familiar relations was rather primitive, and I doubted its expediency; yet it was plain that both the master and his assistant in the next room were capable men, that their methods were modern, and that the children were getting a very fair education.

The girl's school made the same favorable impression. The rooms were pleasant, and good work was being done, in spite of the fact that the lady principal affirmed to me in an aside that her pupils were "little devils." They were more uneasy than the boys—more inclined to be self-conscious, and to twist and turn in the unaccustomed presence of an outsider; but these were not serious faults. Many of the girls wore dark outer frocks much like those worn by the boys. I noticed that the majority of them had rings

in their ears. The fashion of ear-rings, however, is beginning to pass away in France, as in other civilized countries. Until recently the habit was well-nigh universal, but now the girls in the more intelligent families do not have their ears pierced. The seats occupied by the smaller scholars were as lacking in comfort as those of the boys; but the larger girls were favored with benches that had slender back supports.

School began at eight o'clock in the morning, and ended at four in the afternoon. A two-hours' intermission was allowed at noon, and a short recess in each session. Then there was, of course, a weekly holiday; though this came on Thursday instead of on Saturday, as in England and America. The playground used by the boys was a barren, treeless inclosure of dusty earth. That of the girls was hardly less dusty and earthy, but it was in part shadowed by a double row of stumpy trees. Fronting on this playground there were, besides the girls' building, a lesser structure, in which the very little boys and girls were taught, and a cottage occupied by the women teachers.

A very interesting provision is made in the French educational system for encouraging the children in the habit of saving. The teachers are empowered to receive any sums from one sou upwards which the scholars choose to place on deposit, and these are collected monthly by agents of the savings-banks.

Every depositor receives a bank-book, only the child with savings under one franc gets a small bank-book, while the child with above that amount has a large one. During the last seventeen years the boys and girls have opened more than half a million accounts in the savings-banks. Many children, or their parents for them, deposit in an endowment fund intended to give them a capital of from one to two thousand dollars when they become of age.

Most French children leave school for once and all by the time they are thirteen, and it is not always easy, after they are old enough to be of assistance at home, to get parents, especially peasant parents, to send them continuously even to that age. But they at least learn to read; though that may mean the gathering of little more book knowledge than is possessed by their elders, who were never taught anything. That the peasants have very hazy ideas about geography, I early discovered. If I stopped to talk with a laborer in the fields, and mentioned that I was from America, he would want to know whether I was from North or South America.

"North," I reply; and then he inquires if I am from Canada.

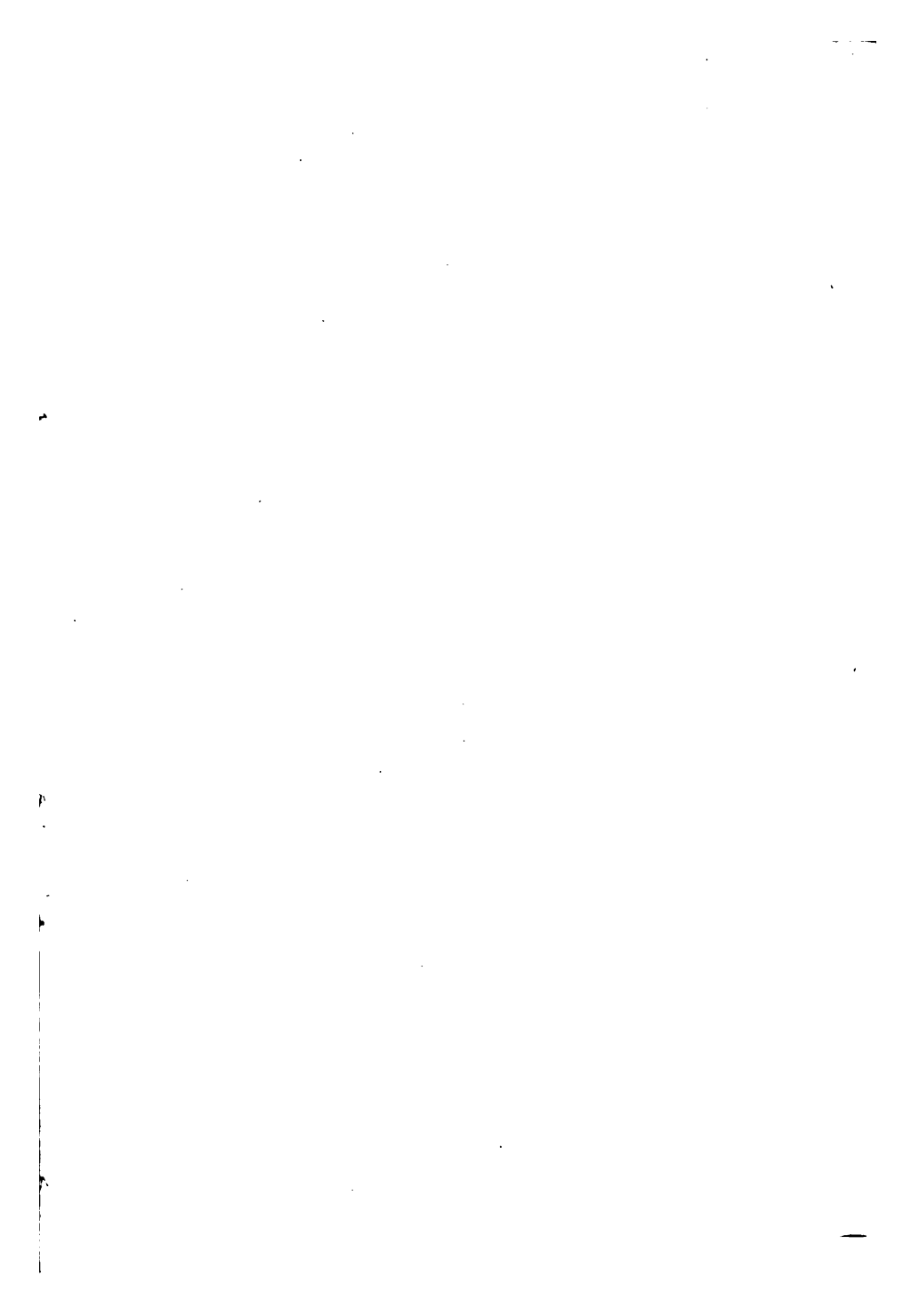
"No; from the United States."

"Ah!" and he looks as if he had heard of that country, but had a very indistinct notion of what and

where it was. But if I speak of having sailed from New York, he brightens perceptibly. He knows that city much better than he does the United States. The matter of placing me being as satisfactorily settled as could be expected, he asks if I am rich; and when I tell him I am not, he looks sceptical, for all Americans are rich in the belief of French peasants.

A boy, unless his parents have means, has almost no chance of education beyond what he gets at the elementary schools. In a very few scattered towns, the government maintains advanced special schools; but it only in part pays the scholars' expenses, and none save the cleverest prize-takers are sent to them. Catholic schools in which the priests and nuns teach after their time-honored ecclesiastical manner are still common, but the Church no longer furnishes teachers and dictates methods to the public schools.

In other ways, however, Church supervision of the child is as unrelaxed as ever, and at present it divides this supervision with the State about evenly. Notice must be sent within twenty-four hours of a baby's birth to the office of the village mayor, so that the official physician may call and assure himself as to various facts which the law requires shall be recorded. Then the father, accompanied by two witnesses, goes to the mayor's office, and, between them all, a birth certificate is filled out, and the child thus gets a legal,





SCHOOLBOYS

documented position in the commonwealth, to which he or she will be obliged to have recourse in all the great and frequently in the minor affairs of life. Without it the child could not enter a school, and in later years could not be enrolled in the army, or get married, and might even have trouble in being buried. The baptismal names declared by the child's relatives must always be placed in the same order in all future deeds and papers, and the least mistake is liable to upset French officialism entirely, and only vast expenditure of time and talk will serve to straighten matters.

If the State, through the statistical physician, is usually the first to take cognizance of the new baby, the Church is not much behind. A priest is sure soon to appear to administer unction, and insure the little one a place in heaven in case it should not have long to live.

The baby's first outing is apt to be a month or two later, when, some Sunday afternoon, it is carried to the church for the sacrament of baptism. All the family and the friends are present, and the baby is sumptuously dressed. Its sponsors renounce Satan's works and pomps in the child's name, while the baby wails with the distress of its unusual clothes and surroundings, and protests mightily against the sprinkling of holy water on its bare head and the laying of salt on its tiny tongue. A christening among the peasantry is always

accompanied by a great feast, and the file of guests walking in couples, arm in arm, to and from church behind the godparents, makes quite an imposing procession. The bells ring merrily, and sugared almonds and pennies are thrown right and left to gladden the hearts of the village urchins. The nurse receives presents from every one, the godfather gives the godmother a present, another to the mother, and, without fail, bestows on his godchild a silver mug, fork, and spoon.

After the children get to be eight or ten years old, boys and girls are no longer the free associates they have been hitherto, and with the first communion, when the girls are eleven and the boys twelve, there is still less of companionship than before. The separation is in part natural, for their interests are different in the amusements that appeal to them, and they have not the same rights or duties. The girls seem by nature to be more religiously inclined than the boys, though this is largely a result of the influence of mothers and teachers, and because it is expected of them. The boys pattern more after their fathers, whose lives seem to argue that religion is not of any great concern to the masculine portion of the race.

Among peasants and laborers, child life is comparatively unhampered, but among the upper classes, the unwritten repressive social laws applying to young

people are many, and they are punctiliously observed. It is a part of the parental creed that the way to make a daughter most maidenly and attractive is to allow her few associates and to keep her constantly under surveillance. Thus it happens that she is rarely given the opportunity to engage in any robust physical exertion, and her toilet is her chief concern, from the age of five up. The system of chaperonage makes her subject to perpetual companionship with servants; and the servants, however willing, good-natured, and even devoted, are often ignorant, superstitious, and deceitful. Frequently the protection rendered by the chaperoning servant seems theoretical rather than real; as, for instance, when the respectability of a young lady in her twenties, on her way to visit at the house of a friend, is guarded by a little maid not more than half her mistress's size and age.

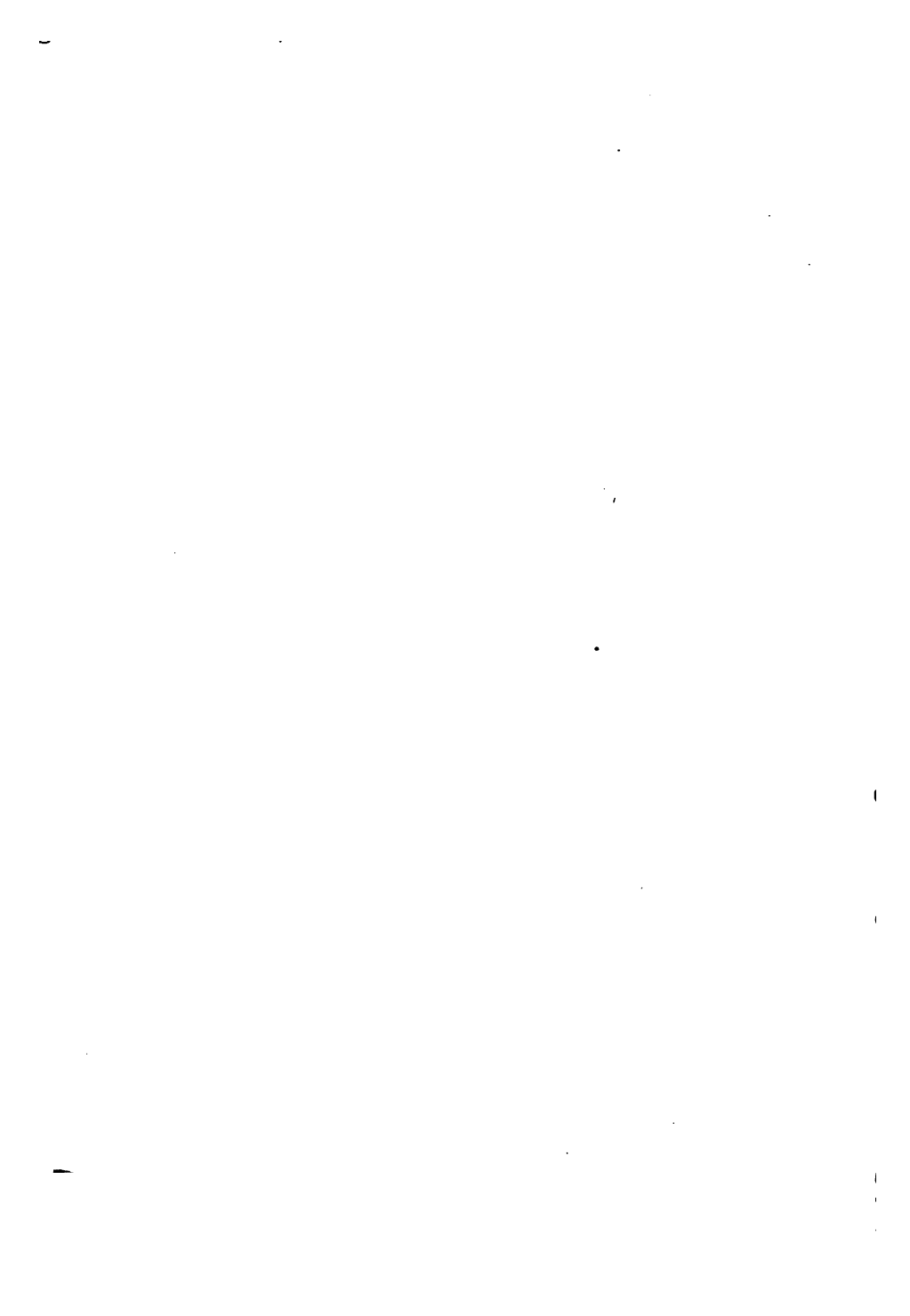
Most girls of the well-to-do class finish their education at a convent school. It is said that they get there adequate exercise and recreation, and that their health is generally good. Certainly they are preserved from nervous excitement, if nothing more. Perhaps the worst feature of the convent is its hostility to all progress. Both the good and the evil of modern times are under a ban, and contact with the world is held to be about the same as contamination. In some convents, when the relatives come to see the

girls, they are only allowed to talk to them through a grating; but in most institutions the rules give them liberty to see each other in the same room, though a guardian nun must always be present. All letters sent or received are read by the superior, and the separation between mothers and daughters is nearly complete, save in the two months of vacation. It is no wonder, then, if marriage is hailed with delight by most French girls as a relief from this unending espionage and repression. It brings them, at least, freedom.

The condition of the boys at the priests' schools is much the same as that of the girls at the convents. Their liberty would hardly be more curtailed if they were criminals. It is a melancholy sight to see these schoolboys taking what is called recreation. They walk in pairs, with their masters accompanying, and even in the seminaries, as young men preparing for the priesthood, they are in custody almost as much as ever. They work long hours, and are noticeably pallid and slender. They get little of the rough and tumble exercise which falls to the lot of our English and American youth, and they are less robust and, I think, less happy. At the age of sixteen or eighteen, the young Frenchman may have more general information and more polish, but he is a forced and precocious hothouse growth, and the consequence of his training



THE READER



is inevitable — when the reins are loosened and the boy is his own master, there is a reaction, and this is not so apt to take the form of healthy sport and pleasure as it is to run to dissipation.

As a whole, the French treatment of youth seemed to me in many ways mistaken and unfortunate, yet there is at least one bright ray of hope auguring better things for the future, and that is, the great advance in effectiveness made within very recent years by the public schools. This leaven working in the national life cannot but make for a more natural and wiser social status.



VI

FRENCH THRIFT



FRANCE, more than any other of the great nations, is a land of thrift. The habit of economy is well-nigh universal. A Frenchman saves as naturally and with as little effort as he breathes. Of course those who waste and the unprosperous are not wholly lacking, but they are a very small minority. In town and country the story is the same—everywhere savings gradually accumulating. Money never slips away carelessly, even for pleasures. It is said that the hotels at the resorts of fashion could not begin to support themselves on French custom.

They depend largely on the inflocking of other nationalities; and among all these foreign seekers after health and recreation, none make the money fly and rejoice

the hearts of the French landlords like the English and Americans. Except by those who have an eye to the profits, the expenses of the average Anglo-Saxon tourist are regarded as a sacrifice of good money without adequate return. Nor do the French quite believe that this lavish expenditure is a sure indication of wealth. "The Americans," they say, "like to make a show. They would have us think they all possessed a fortune, and so they spend foolishly — far more than they can afford in many cases — and when they return they have to pinch to make up."

However that may be, we as a nation could well take lessons in the art of saving from our neighbors across the sea. To spend freely part of the time and, when the "rainy day" comes, to be obliged to stint and scrape to keep up appearances, is too apt to be the American way, but it certainly is not the ideal way. In France these violent fluctuations are for the most part avoided. Hard work, careful spending, and, more than all, the general possession of a bank deposit tide the people over personal reverses and carry the state unshaken through trials that at first seem to portend national disaster. The persistent economy, it is true, has a tendency to degenerate into selfishness and avarice, but it necessarily results also in habits of rigid sobriety and self-respect.

The savings of the rural folk are largely deposited

with the government. Interest is allowed, and on dividend day the people flock in such numbers to the local branches of the state bank that the countryside is depopulated. It is a motley crowd — important functionaries, fashionable ladies, laundresses, laborers, and artisans, all with their coupons awaiting their turn.

Often there will be several bank accounts in a single ordinary farm family; and the servants are almost as likely to be depositors as the rest of the household, some of them to a considerable amount. You may find, for instance, an elderly woman servant, who has worked in the same family for fifty years, with money enough in the funds to live on without further labor if she chose. She began to work at an annual salary of thirty dollars. By the end of twenty years the remuneration had been increased to fifty dollars, and that is the sum she has received ever since. From this and the gifts it is customary to make the servants at New Year's, she has laid aside steadily until she has a very handsome sum to her credit.

There are many like her in the French country. I remember once when I chanced to inquire about a new house that was nearing completion on the borders of a village, I was told that it was being built by a coachman. Some time he would live in it, but not till his own working days were over. For the present it was to be rented. The wages of the coachman and

his wife together were probably about twenty dollars a month and they each very likely had something left them by their parents. They spent little, for they lived in their master's household, and the donation of their master's and mistress's old clothes saved them nearly all expense for wearing apparel. They not only could, but did, lay up a large part of their salary, and as a result they were becoming people of property.

I do not know that there is anything in French character compelling to save, but it is the habit of the country, and from childhood the people grow up with that dominant idea in their heads. No hardships or reverses can quell it. Taxation in France is higher than in England or in Germany, yet the solvency and accumulative thrift of the French continue phenomenal.

I could not discover that the farm folk in their work showed any marked tendency to excessive labor. They are much less apt than we to worry their lives short with haste or with the weight of many cares; and, however humble, they are almost never involved in that steady, hopeless grind which for so many of the English laborers has the workhouse at the end. To a very great extent the land is owned by those who till it, the people are content with the plainest living, and every member of the family is a

worker. Distribution of labor lightens the burden, but I thought it bore heavier than need be on the shoulders of women. In the lighter tasks it is all well enough, and it was pleasant to see the women helping in the hay-fields, working in the wheat, or in some byway or grassy pasture knitting while they watched a grazing flock of sheep. One could not but fancy that tasks like these, with their accompaniment of sunshine and air and exercise, were wholesome and invigorating. Yet when I saw women bending their backs all day long weeding, or caught glimpses of them blowing the bellows and helping in the blacksmiths' shops, and noted how exposure to the sun and weather made their complexions as they aged turn leathery and yellow, it seemed a little too hard.

A French farmhouse interior is an odd mixture of squalor and solid ease, if not comfort; and the housework is simple to the point of primitiveness. A farmer may be independently rich, and yet a fine house and a multiplication of wants and responsibilities are by no means a consequence, and the living-room may continue to be the big kitchen with its wide fireplace, its beds and wardrobes. The furnishings are rarely so elaborate as to require much time or attention. Neither is the cooking burdensome, though the food provided, even in the poorest families, is sure to be good and abundant. The French are clever in their

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A FARMYARD GATE

cookery, and no people understand better how to prepare a palatable and satisfactory meal with infinitesimal expense. They never throw away anything. From what would be table waste in America they are always able to contrive some viand that agreeably helps out in meals following. Complicated dishes are avoided, and everything is served with only as much table-setting as is absolutely necessary.

There is a tendency now among the well-to-do farmers to travel more than formerly, live better, and pattern after the gentry. Some have their fast horses, their valets and grooms, and they no longer closely supervise their farms and work with their hands among their laborers as was one time the universal habit. The wife has jewels, and the children acquire a polite education and extravagant tastes. Such farmers complain that they cannot make money as their fathers did, and blame the times or something outside of themselves. They do not consider that they neither work nor spend as the fathers did. Luckily for France, farmers of this species are as yet exceptional.

Farms vary greatly in size. The humblest type of a peasant proprietor has only two or three acres. He keeps a goat, a pig, and some poultry, but in large part must depend on outside work for the family support. A man with a dozen acres, a horse, and two or three cows can spend his whole energies on his farm

with the prospect of accumulating money. Any holding under 125 acres, however, is considered small. Medium-sized farms range from that to 250 acres. In some sections there are farms running up into thousands of acres, but in most districts the man who controls an area running above 250 acres is accounted a large farmer. Statistics prove that small farms are the rule practically everywhere, the average size of holdings throughout the nation being only sixty-three acres. In England the average is 400 acres and in America the figures run still higher. It follows that as three-fourths of the French population is rural and as the agriculturists in the main own the land they till, the small farmers constitute the most vital and characteristic life of the republic.

One of the most attractive agricultural regions I saw was in the fertile valley of the river Oise. The land spread away from the borders of the stream in a great open plain that stretched as far as the eye could see, unbroken, save by now and then a group of trees or a huddle of plethoric grain stacks. So fertile was the soil that, if report was correct, it had made all the farmers of the district rich, the little farmers as well as the large ones; and those who rented their land were often more wealthy than their gentry landlords. This being the state of affairs, I was curious to see what the villages of these rich agri-

culturists would be like, and I paid an investigating visit to one of them. It was not at all palatial, but a gray, sleepy old place presided over by an ancient, mossy church with a brazen weathercock looking down from its spire. The houses were big and antiquated, and there were high walls about the farmyards, and the entrances were hung with heavy gates, so that each home had the air of being a fortress built to repel invaders.

On the top of the wall next every farm gate was fastened a withered bush, and tied to it was what appeared to be a few rags and a bedraggled handful of straw. This bush was reminiscent of the end of the harvest of the previous year. When the last of the hay and grain had been gathered into the ricks and barns, the old bush, set up a twelvemonth before, was taken down, and a new bush, full of leaves, trimmed with ribbons, and hung with a sheaf of yellow grain, was put in its place. The ceremony of installing the decorated bush on the walls at the portals of the farmyard occurs at noon, after a morning spent working in the fields. The afternoon is given up to pleasure, and the laborers and the farmer's family join in celebrating with feasting and a generous flow of wine.

The pay received by a French laborer is ordinarily not far from seventy to eighty cents a day, but in win-

ter will hardly rise above sixty cents. A woman gets about half as much. During the six weeks of harvest time a good worker is allowed special pay, and can earn a dollar a day and his bread. The city has a strong attraction for those who do not themselves own or rent land, and it is not easy to get good help. In northern France much of the farm labor is done by Belgians. They come across the borders in great numbers each spring, and are hired for a term of six months. They are paid, however, not by the day or week, but by the job — so much an acre for hoeing the sugar-beets, so much for mowing, cutting the grain, etc. The farmer furnishes them all the cider they want to drink, and at noon serves them with vegetable soup; while at night he gives them a place to sleep in the barn. Otherwise, they take care of themselves. They buy bread, and they get bacon to use in making soup; and on Sundays they perhaps indulge in a piece of beef. They go barefooted; they work like slaves; and in economy of living they could give points to the Chinese. They come year after year to the same farms, and at the end of each six months of labor they take home a goodly sum of money.

One thing deterrent to French thrift is the increase during recent years of alcoholism. Formerly the people drank almost no liquors save their mild wines. But the devastation of the vineyards by the phyl-

loxa reduced the amount of wine produced, and its place was in part taken by highly alcoholized artificial wines, which acted disastrously on the habits and life of the people. At the same time, science was revealing new sources of alcohol. Corn, potatoes, and beet-roots began to yield it in large and profitable quantities. Some of the most fertile agricultural districts were allured to alcohol making, and distilleries sprang up everywhere and placed their cheap and poisonous liquors within easy reach of the industrial masses. Self-interest, too, makes the public houses encourage the consumption of spirits; for their profit on them is very large as compared with that on wine. The number of saloons has multiplied, and drunkenness, which formerly was exceptional and individual, has grown common. But the country has awakened to the magnitude of the evil, and it is believed that the tide is now turning.

Another heavy burden to the country is the military system. Up to 1872, lots were drawn in each commune every year to decide who of the young men should join the army. The highest numbers entitled the holders to total exemption; the lowest meant seven years' service. Only sons, students at the seminaries, and teachers pledged to ten years' public service, were free from obligation; but immunity could in any case be purchased. However, as the price of

exemption was in no instance less than five hundred dollars, and often much more, this means of avoiding military service could only be taken advantage of by the rich ; while the breadwinner of the poor frequently had to give up seven years of his prime.

After the reverses of the war with the Germans, the system was reconstructed. At present, every able-bodied citizen of the republic, beginning at the age of twenty, must serve his turn in the army. It is not possible to buy a substitute, and only the sick, disabled, and deformed escape conscription. Theological students, and those whose calling is art, science, or literature, are let off with one year, but practically all others must be in the army for three years. The pay of the common soldier is less than five cents a day, and none but those who must can keep their petty personal expenses within such a sum. Usually a soldier's home folks furnish him with more or less pocket-money, according to their means. When the service is outside of France, the pay is higher. Such service is done wholly by volunteers, and these are never lacking, partly owing to the attraction of a larger allowance, but moved more by the chance to see foreign lands and to win glory, should there be fighting.

Formerly, it was the custom to quarter the soldiers as far from home as possible, those from the north in





CHURNING DAY

the south, and *vice versa*. The idea was that they would put down local risings with more energy than if they were obliged to assert their military authority over their friends and neighbors; but now the comfort and convenience of the soldiers themselves are more consulted, and they are stationed as near home as is feasible. This, combined with the fact that the railroads are obliged to carry them at one-fourth the regular fares, enables them to often return to the parental roof for short visits.

At best the soldier's life is a hard one, and most men gladly withdraw when they have served their time, to take up their work where they left it off. Their interests during their term in the army are by no means all military, and on a market day you may see soldiers examining as minutely as any of the country folks the displays of agricultural implements. The fascination of the ploughs and harrows lies in the fact that the soldiers are looking forward to the day when they will be released and back on the farm.

After the one or three years of continuous service the ex-soldiers—peasants, priests, artists, doctors, and all the rest—have to give twenty-eight days from each of the following two years to military drill, and thirteen days from each of the two years after that. Then they are finally free, except that in case of need they are liable to be drafted until they are forty-five.

One of the most noticeable ambitions of the French commercial class is the desire to acquire a competence and then retire from business and live on the income of their investments. That end attained, they are members of the "bourgeois" class, the French gentry—and they really enjoy doing nothing to a degree quite incomprehensible to one from a land where the men of affairs, no matter what their age or wealth, are never content to be wholly separated from their business, and usually die in harness.

The associates which a person may have among the French bourgeois are largely determined by income. A man in receipt of a thousand dollars a year is looked down on by the man whose income is twice that amount, and the latter in turn is regarded from above by the person who has annually a still greater sum at his disposal. To a considerable extent this is the way of the world anywhere; on the amount of income largely depends one's manner of life and interests, and hence, also, one's associates. But the separation which money makes, rather than brains and character, is much more marked in France than with us.

When a French son or daughter marries, the parents are expected to provide for him or her, as the case may be, a good start in life. There is nothing haphazard about it. Everything is figured out and all parties know just where they stand beforehand. A

Frenchman does not marry for love alone. He is never blind to the worth of his bride,—her financial worth,—and some flaw in that will keep him long hesitating. The more money he has himself, the more he wants his intended should have. He is anxious to live as well in the future as in the past, if not better. He must have money—he must have a home. Married life in a boarding-house, which we Americans undertake all too cheerfully, he thinks impossible. A happy-go-lucky future of that sort he would not contemplate for a moment.

As to the women, financiering plays less part in their love. The young ladies are acutely sensitive to the undesirability of becoming and staying old maids. They are romantic and ready to love and to be loved. But the woman who lacks the lucre which other girls of her class have, no matter how clever or handsome she may be, has small chance of marrying.

A man of exceptional intelligence with whom I talked on this subject took pains to warn me against accepting the life found in French novels as a true picture of national character. "Courtship with us," said he, "is very commonplace. There is little glamour about it, and the novelists in order to give their stories interest add spice without limit, and lug in all sorts of wickedness that have little or no foundation in reality. They give foreign readers a very distorted impression of us."

As an example of the very unsentimental character of French wooing he related to me this story of his village grocer, who had recently wedded. The grocer, it seemed, had passed his thirtieth year and was beginning to feel alarmed to see his youth slipping away and he still single, and likely to remain so if he did not bestir himself. But what gave him most concern was the need of having some one to assist him in his business. How was a man to get on all alone in a grocery store? But what could he do?—he knew of no woman who seemed to him exactly eligible and suited for a grocer's assistant. So he informed his neighbor, Madame S., of his quandary, and she said she would help him.

In Paris, which was some twenty miles distant, lived a friend of madame's who had two daughters, and they were poor, and it was difficult to find good mates for them. Here was perhaps a chance to dispose of one of the maidens. She mentioned the matter to their mother, and as the grocer was entirely respectable and industrious she was quite willing he should become her son-in-law. Then madame explained the progress she had made to the grocer, but warned him there would be no dowry. However, considering the pressing needs of his grocer's shop, he was ready to waive the matter of dowry if the girls were of the right sort. Madame informed him that



EVENING VISITING



they were having some work done at her dressmaker's in the village, and that they would be out to see about it the following Sunday. He could call at the dress-makers while they were there if he chose, and make their acquaintance.

The young man met the two young women as planned, and he told madame afterward that the tallest, the elder one, pleased him very much, but he liked her sister, too. He did not wish to decide between them rashly, and he desired to know when he could see them again. She replied that they would next be in the village on Thursday of that week.

The grocer made arrangements this time, not only to meet the two young ladies he was courting, but to see them back to Paris. "And I shall take with me a white rose," said he to madame, "and the one to whom I give the white rose will be my choice."

Thursday came, and the trip to Paris was made—a party of four—the two girls, their mother, and the grocer. From the Paris railway station to the home of the ladies they rode in a public omnibus, and it chanced that the omnibus they hailed had but two vacant seats inside. The mother and younger daughter took those, and the grocer and the elder girl climbed to the roof of the vehicle; and there, as they rode through the Paris streets, he gave her the white rose and told her of his ardent affection and his sincere desire to make her his

assistant in the grocer's business. Six weeks later they were married, and they are living together now as happily and with as few differences as fall to the lot of most married couples, while the improvement at the shop is manifest to all observers.

With the beginning of wedded life French young people take up their work, not only with the intention of making it yield them a living, but a steadily increasing surplus. Some time they hope to retire, and they must besides have the money to give their children respectable dowries when they grow up and marry. The responsibility the parents feel in the matter of providing adequately for themselves and their families makes them desire that their children shall be few. This is not because they are French, but because they are thrifty. The thrifty everywhere regard large families as detrimental to the accumulation of wealth, and to its intactness after it is accumulated. Thus, in France, large families are common only among the propertyless poor, who have no need to think of providing dowries, and who have no hope of a leisure and independence in old age that a numerous progeny might imperil.

That the almost stationary population of the country is due to racial degeneracy I think very doubtful. To a great extent, at least, financial reasons furnish the true explanation. It is not wholly agreeable to

find the commercial idea such a controlling factor in all the affairs of life; yet, leave it out altogether and wreck is inevitable. Certainly luck and sentiment would hardly be safe substitutes.



VII

THE VILLAGE OF JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET



FEW places in the world are more closely associated with names of genius than is Barbizon with the name of Jean François Millet. To think of him and of his work is at once to recall this little peasant village near Paris, on the borders of the Forest of Fontainebleau. But though we know of Barbizon as Millet's home and the place where he painted all of his most famous pictures, he was born far away on the western coast; and for many dragging, unsuccessful years in the earlier part of his career he lived in Paris. Indeed, he did not desert the city for the country until he had reached the age of thirty-five, and then only by reason of his being driven out by an epidemic of cholera.

Barbizon was chosen as a refuge because it was not too far away, and because it already was to some

degree a resort of painters, notable among whom was Theodore Rousseau. The village was then very humble and poor. Few strangers ever entered its seclusion, and the little group of artists were the only outsiders. It was a plain farming community, without a church, without a hotel, without anything to give it publicity.

It has changed since, and though most of its permanent inhabitants are still farmers, it is no longer the place to seek for rural retirement. Since the death of its half-starved artists, its fame as their abode has become a lodestone that draws worshipful tourists from all parts of the earth. Another attraction, and one which appeals more powerfully to the general public and does more to build up the growing reputation that Barbizon now has as a pleasure resort, is the fact that within easy access are some of the wildest and most beautiful parts of the Forest of Fontainebleau. This brings to the place people of all sorts and conditions, and the majority of them care little or nothing for Millet or Rousseau, or for any other artists. They are usually wholly intent on excursions and picnics in the forest, and the woodland ways are always enlivened by pedestrians, by people driving or on bicycles, and by many automobiles spinning along the smooth, hard main roads with their peculiar throb and clatter.

The region has adapted itself to the needs of the crowd, and there are restaurants here and there in the forest, several big hotels have interpolated themselves among the cottages and farmhouses of the village, and the engines of a steam tramway go creaking and puffing through the one long, narrow street at frequent intervals. This tramway connects the village with the railroad eight miles distant, and it is regarded as an improvement over the omnibuses it supersedes, though the speed attained by its slow, ponderous trains seems hardly to justify such an assumption. The engines are ugly iron monsters, with stumpy, flaring smokestacks that develop an asthmatic violence in their snorting and wheezing which can be heard for miles. The whistles, on the other hand, are mild to the point of puerility. Their warning is for all the world like the notes of a tin dinner-horn. I could hardly believe at first that a blast of steam, and not the breath of human lungs, had produced the weakling sound. But what the whistle lacks in power it makes up in persistence, for it toots with all too faithful constancy from one end of the route to the other. Could anything be contrived more likely than such a tramway to drive away the rural nymphs that charmed the old-time Barbizon painters? I can fancy Millet's horror had this grimy creature of the machine-shops invaded the peace of the place in his day.





MILLET'S HOME ON BARBIZON STREET

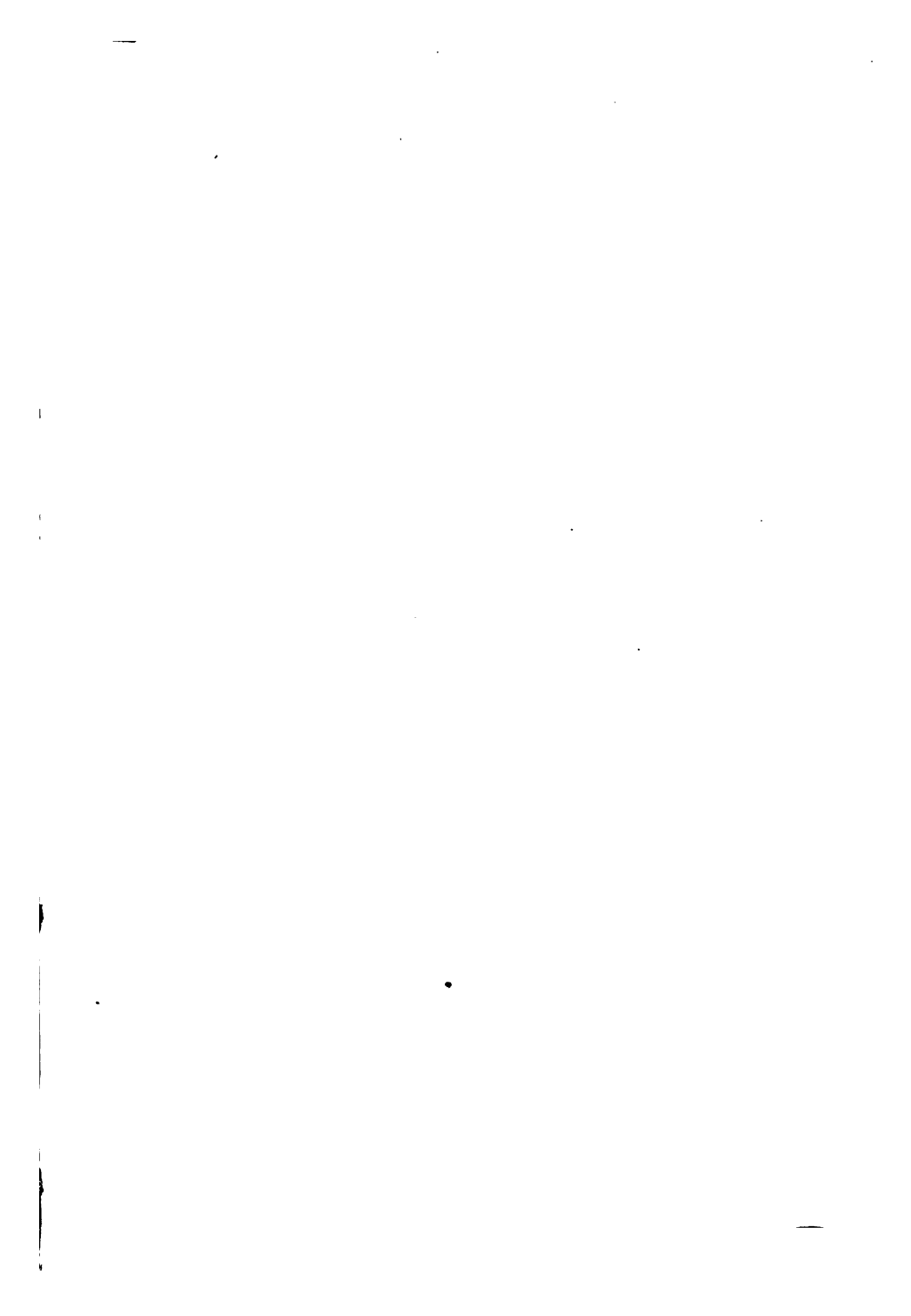
The wonder is, not that the village and its life retain so little of the rustic, but that, in spite of tramway, competing hotels, and the ebbing and flowing of tourists, they retain so much. The farmhouses are essentially the same as they were a quarter or half a century ago, and the peasantry themselves, so long as they are not actually crowded out, apparently keep on just as if the environment were no different from what it had always been. With the sightseers and pleasure-hunters they have nothing in common, and one affects the other very little. Thus the modern and the ancient are curiously mingled in Barbizon life. Fashion and wealth and the plain farm folk are equally in evidence. The latter go about their tasks unconcerned, and do their work after the time-honored ways handed down to them from their ancestors. If visitors from abroad see in them living figures stepping from the canvases of Dupré or Millet, it is no affair of theirs. They accept this tourist enthusiasm as a sort of craze—an evident weakness past understanding, but which is, happily, harmless.

With the passing years the peasant costume tends to lose its peculiar characteristics, yet perhaps no more here than in most places. It seems to be manifest destiny that we shall all dress alike the world over, in time. The country wants to attire itself after the manner of the town, and the poor as do the rich, indepen-

dent of costs and conditions. But with the older French people innovations usually find small favor, and in Barbizon men who wear blue blouses and wooden shoes are not uncommon, and white caps or colored kerchiefs are still the customary headgear of the elderly women.

The women are field workers as well as house workers, and you meet them on the street trundling home barrows of grass which they have cut with their sickles, or see them baiting their cows along the roadways. But oftenest they are to be found working with the men, hoeing, weeding, or haying.

The landscape of the fields is in no wise especially interesting. Toward the west is the forest, which includes some low, craggy hills crowded with dark pine woods, but otherwise the view is flat and commonplace. The only variety offered is that of occasional groves and scattered villages. Yet at the time of my visit the fields had a very real charm in their local color. Nowhere else in France did I see such a profusion of flowering weeds. They ran riot all through the wheat and the grass lands, and jewelled the fields almost past believing. Scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers were the most common. They overtopped the grass; but in the wheat they were half concealed, and their motion in the wind made them seem alive — as if they were gay-gowned gypsies in a wood.





A PAUSE IN THE DAY'S LABOR

An acquaintance with Barbizon village reveals a good deal that is attractive in its older parts. Some of the buildings have a picturesque habit of hugging the public way. Others are more retiring and have narrow grounds before them, with massive street walls fortifying their seclusion. These walls are in many places ornamented with vines, and now and then are shadowed by trees reaching over from the house enclosures. The walls are high, and it is only when a gateway is open that you get a look at the yard beyond. Then you very likely see a court full of flower-beds overflowing with green leafage and gay blossoms. Even when the yard is bare, the house walls are not. Many doorways can be glimpsed sprayed about with beautiful rose vines, which in the season are crowded full of flowers. Perhaps the most interesting of the yards are those of the farms, with their litter of straw and tools, wagons and rubbish. A colony of hens is sure to be picking about, and usually there are several dogs, whose chief recreation consists in greeting all strangers with a medley of canine howls.

The houses are low, frequently only a story and a half, and have walls of stone, either the natural gray or brushed over with light tints of whitewash. Roofs are of tile, the older ones mellowed with moss and weather stains. Swallows build under the eaves, and are always flitting and twittering over and about the village. The

street is roughly paved, and has on either side a narrow walk that, like those of all French villages, varies in width according to the situation of the buildings along the way. The bordering residences and shops have never conformed to any particular order or angle, and they have a very capricious way of slanting out on the walk or thrusting into it full length, and in spots it is so attenuated that meeting pedestrians have, one or the other, to betake themselves to the street. Blocks or slabs of stone arranged for seats, are commonly to be found against the street walls adjoining home entrances, and on these the people are fond of sitting in the evening and seeing the sights of the highway and getting the news from loitering passers. The scene is usually very peaceful, except when the trains of the tramway are rampaging through the hamlet. Once during my stay there was a fight, but it was short and bloodless. A man who owned a cornet gave a sample of his music one evening on the street, and a neighbor who did not like the playing let the musician know his opinion of his performance. As a result the two came to blows, greatly to the entertainment of all the witnesses save the fighters' wives. Barbizon has no policeman — not, I believe, because it is exceptionally law-abiding, but because it chances never to have had such an institution from a remote past, and present need is always doubted in

the face of ancient custom. So there was nothing to do but for the wives to take on themselves the responsibility of restoring order. Each laid hold on her man, and the combatants were pulled apart. Then the musician with his horn, and the critic, limply mute, were marched off in different directions home. Whether domestic chastisement followed I am unable to say. Certainly some of the French wives have all the muscle and authority needed to administer it if they chose.

The only other unusual incident I recall was an outdoor entertainment given one evening by a troupe of strolling players. These players had been in the village for some days, and had a shooting-gallery down at the far end of the street on the edge of the forest. Near this they now put up a slender framework, and hung from it a trapeze and various ropes and rings, while on the ground round about were set a few benches for the expected audience.

Late in the afternoon one of the men of the troupe went through the village with a drum, making all the noise he could, and announcing with a flourish at every corner and before all the hotels that the coming performance would be something extraordinary, and that it would begin at half-past eight. Some hours later, in the twilight, the drummer sounded his alarum through the village again. On his return to head-

quarters he slipped off his outer clothing and revealed a red-habited athlete.

The audience was slim — only a group of boys and a few little girls. The man in red seemed not satisfied. He rattled his drum at intervals, trimmed the lights that hung on the framework, and ostentatiously busied himself about nothing. It was nine o'clock when the show began.

First came music, instrumental and vocal, in which the red man played a guitar and a woman in white stood on a bench and sang a dramatic song with many gestures. It was an interesting scene, with the flaring, smoky oil lamps lighting up the players and the lookers-on, while behind rose the lofty gloom of the forest. The song was followed by some gymnastics on the part of the red man, whose feats on the rings and the trapeze were warmly applauded. The audience had meanwhile been growing, and not only children but many older folk stood about. When I left presently and returned to my hotel, I met many groups strolling toward the place of entertainment, and it was evident that by the time the play was over the company would attain a very goodly size.

To the Millet lover every phase of village life and every glimpse of the peasants about their homes or at their field work is full of interest; for Millet not only painted this life, but was himself a part of it. No





PLOUGHING

village dweller was more humble. He wore a peasant's dress, even to the wooden shoes, and for a part of his day he labored in the garden and fields like other peasants. He lived in a low, dark cottage, no better than the cottages of his peasant neighbors. There were no luxuries in his home, and sometimes he was hard pressed to supply the necessaries. Among the villagers he was social, always had a greeting for those he met, and was ever ready to talk without the least affectation or feeling of superiority.

Millet was very fond of children, and was happy in having a generous number in his own household—his own children at first, and later his grandchildren. After the evening meal he often entertained them with songs and stories, or, what they liked best of all, drew pictures for them. The rudest materials sufficed for these sketches, and an old newspaper and a match dipped in the inkstand did as well as anything. A few magic strokes on the margin of the newspaper would complete a picture and illustrate an incident. Usually the picture was of some farm scene, a peasant driving a loaded cart, a woman feeding a calf, a dog barking at a cow, a girl leading a goat. Sometimes, instead of going to his imagination for a subject, he drew objects in the room—the children themselves, perhaps, or the baby in the cradle being rocked to sleep by its mother. Nor was it only in the evening

that Millet gave himself to his children. He was often their companion in his daytime leisure, and liked to have them with him when he walked in the forest. They were true peasant children in their bringing up, and mingled on an equality with the other youngsters of the village.

Millet was not a good business man, and, though considerable sums passed through his hands, he was nearly all his life in very straitened circumstances. He was often behind with his rent, and sometimes induced his landlord to accept pictures instead of money. The landlord in his dealings is said to have been very shrewd, and to have gained possession of many of his tenant's best pictures. After the artist's death he turned the family out of the home that had been so long theirs, laid his hands on all Millet's paintings that the arrears in rent would give excuse for, and, after realizing sixty thousand dollars by a sale of a part of the canvases he had acquired, he shut up the atelier for once and all. At least that is the way the tale runs as told in the village now.

The son and successor of Millet's landlord has something the same ogreish reputation. Visitors are excluded from the premises, the studio shutters are always closed, and no one is allowed a glimpse of its fabled treasures. All you can see of the studio is its rear, which backs up against the street walk. It is

low and white, and an air of silence and gloom overhangs it.

Once I found the gate of the place ajar, and, in spite of all I had heard about its owner, I ventured to go inside. There was small suggestion of the Millet days. The grounds are laid out with lawn and trim gravel paths and shade trees, and the dwelling has been much altered. It is no longer the cottage of a peasant, but the country residence of one of the lesser gentry. I staid only a minute or two, for a gardener came running out as if greatly alarmed at the presence of an intruder; and he was plainly ill at ease until he had seen me outside the gate.

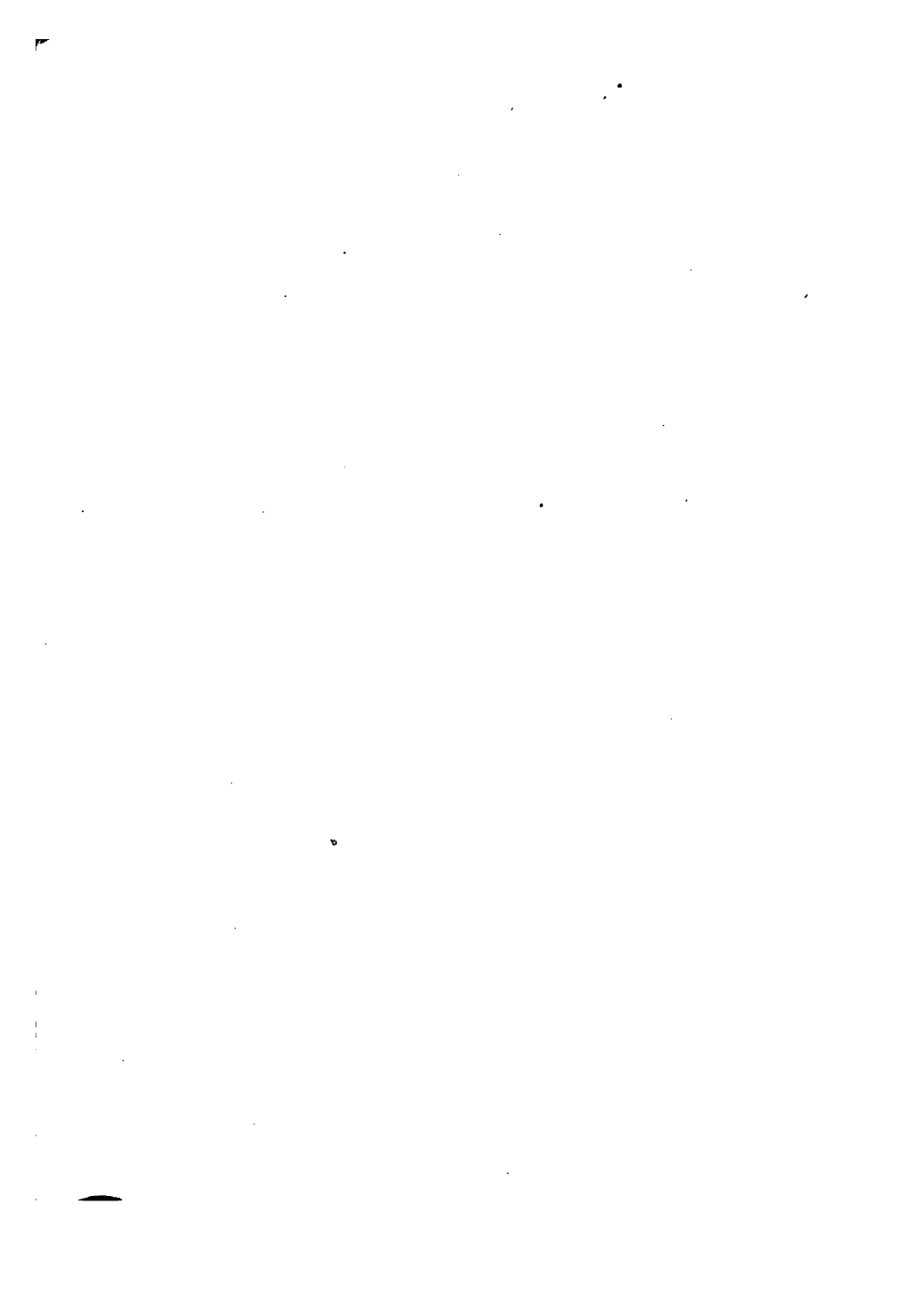
Rousseau's home is only a few doors distant. It is larger than was Millet's, and sets back from the street under the shadows of some tall trees. It adjoins the little church, and you can approach it only by entering the churchyard. Not until recently did the village have a church, and the edifice is the gift of two actresses who retired a few years ago to Barbizon to spend their last days. One of the actresses is still living, a bent, feeble old woman over eighty. I used to see her several times a day, her cane in her hand, and supported by a white-coiffured nun, shuffling along the street to devotions at her church. The building has the look of a pretty cottage, it is so small and so embowered with the leafage of vines and trees, while

the yard in front is a garden of flowers and shrubs. On the borders of the path are several settees, and when the shadows lengthened in the warm afternoons the retreat was cool and inviting. It seemed to be a favorite loitering place of Millet's son, the only one of the artist's children still living in the village, for I often saw him there. He has followed his father's profession, and is said to do very good work.

The nearest house of worship in Millet's time was at Chailly, two miles distant. He was a devoted attendant, and walked there to service every Sunday. The Chailly church is locally believed to be the one which appears in "The Angelus," but most probably the landscape of the picture is a memory or vision; and it is the less easy to make good the claim of the Chailly church, as the reality has only a stumpy tower, while a spire appears in the painting. The attitude of prayer taken by the two figures was also more likely to have been a memory than a characteristic of Barbizon, although Millet worked from local models. It would certainly have been more typical of his boyhood region on the remote Norman coast than of the country about Paris, where old customs always weaken first. You see nothing of such observance of the Angelus now at Barbizon, and I do not know that it survives in any part of the republic. The Angelus still rings, morn-



A NOON LUNCH IN THE FIELDS



ing, noon, and night, but it is recognized only as a signal to begin or stop work, not for prayer.

From the far end of Barbizon street you can see on a near hill-slope within the forest a great boulder with a large bronze tablet inset on its face. When you draw nearer, you find on the tablet a portrait head of Millet, coupled with that of Rousseau. It seems a noble and fitting monument to these two giants of their day and generation, lovers of the forest and of Nature in every mood, prophets and seers who have interpreted the beautiful to all mankind. Their strong, earnest faces have the look of primitive power, and the loneliness of this thinly wooded, sandy, rock-strewn hill is in fitting harmony with the laborious, ill-requited hardship of their lives.

The forest is much criss-crossed with roads and paths, and exploration is easy, the only danger being that of losing one's way. By the time I left Barbizon I had seen nearly all of it within moderate walking distance. It presents a great deal of variety. You find primeval woodland and parklike groves and pastoral glades, and you find wild gorges strewn with boulders that look like the waste of some ancient geological quarry of the gods. The boulders are not confined to the gorges. You come across them in the woodland almost everywhere — great, loose, rounded rocks, some of them scattered, others lying in rude heaps. The

stones are picturesquely waterworn, and when you walk in the twilight of the deep woods, you might fancy they were alive — a migration of vast turtles, hugging the earth in slow onward march.

At times the forest fires run through the woods; the trees are killed, the peaty soil is consumed, and it takes a long time for the charred earth to heal and for new growths to start. Sections recently burnt bristle with dead trees still standing, and their leafless twigs bare against the sky make the scene strange and depressing. But pass out of the burned districts, and you have the company of the lofty pine trees, or of the feathery, graceful beeches, with their sinewy, mottled trunks, or of the great oaks, gnarled and angular, and crowned with dark, heavy foliage. In the opens grow the heather, the broom, and other shrubbery tangling among the lichened rocks; while in the shadowy, sun-flecked forest depths you find a carpet of ferns and thin grasses. Birds sing, pigeons coo, a cuckoo calls far away, and you hear the caw of rooks above the treetops.

Fontainebleau is the largest of all the French forests. You can travel continuously in it in one direction for twenty miles. Its greatest lack is the entire absence of streams or ponds, for the rainfall is wholly absorbed by the sandy soil and chalky rocks. I was told that the forest did boast of a single pool in a certain hilltop hol-

low, but when a friend who knew the forest undertook to show me this rarity, it had disappeared as the result of recent dry weather. The only surface water he succeeded in finding was a faint dropping at long intervals from an overhanging ledge known as "The Weeping Rock."

There are deer and other wild creatures in the forest, but I saw nothing of such denizens unless I except some little lizards that I found in my pathway basking in the hot rays of the sun. They had no desire for my acquaintance, and scurried away into the undergrowth with a speed that was astonishing considering their short legs. Human life, if the day was pleasant, always abounded on the forest ways, people on foot and people in vehicles, a ceaseless flow of them from morn till night. One of their favorite resorts in the immediate neighborhood of Barbizon is a cavern of considerable size, famed as the lodging-place of an old-time band of brigands. So secluded was their forest retreat that they robbed on the highways between Fontainebleau and Paris for nearly three years before their lair was discovered. It is in a lonely place near the summit of a rough, rock-strewn ridge. I planned to visit it, but on the day I made the trip two drunken men, singing and carousing, had taken possession of the vicinity, and they were so like the evil spirits of the old robbers come to haunt the spot that I did not care to encounter them, and turned back.

The forest trees and rocks were reminiscent of Rousseau rather than Millet. The latter's memory comes home to one more keenly in the fields, for though he was a lover of the forest, it did not appeal to him as did the open farm-lands. It was toward them that he bent his steps when he went for a walk at his favorite hour of twilight. The semi-darkness stimulated his imagination, and the movements of men and creatures on the plain, the sound of bells, the creak of loaded carts were poems to him.

In putting his impressions on canvas he chose to work in low tones, making no appeal to the eye through brilliance of color or the attractiveness of the figures he introduced. Often his types were rude to the verge of ugliness, for he abhorred anything in the least tainted with prettiness or sentimentality. Labor was most often his theme, and to it he added weariness, which he says "is the common lot of humanity." This view, which was largely the result of his own sombre experiences in life, he painted into his pictures with all the sincerity of a great soul. But if there is always present an undertone of sadness in his work, there is also a vein of sweetness, of courage, and of absolute honesty; and this, taken altogether, was Millet.

If you eliminate the personal element from what he did, and go behind the painting to the people he portrayed, you would not find them just what they were



CUTTING THISTLES OUT OF THE WHEAT



as he interpreted them. At any rate those of modern Barbizon are comparatively prosaic and cheerful; yet another master would undoubtedly find in them just as moving subjects as Millet found in their predecessors a generation or two ago.

I think the artists who now make Barbizon their resort and summer working-place have the impression that the region itself has some mystical power to impart inspiration. Several of them were at the hotel where I was staying, and I had a chance to observe their ways. The one who made himself most conspicuous was a young man who must have been a very great genius, if genius consists in length and bushiness of hair. He was a scion of a family of wealth, and on his birthday, shortly before, his mother sent him a present of a thousand francs and asked him to come home to see her. But the present made him forget the accompanying request, and he set to work to enjoy himself. He let loose all his propensities to vice and had an uproarious time. His hotel account rose to three hundred francs a week, and in a fortnight his surplus was sufficiently reduced so that he was ready to return to the ordinary course of his life.

I do not offer him as a fair sample of the present race of Barbizon artists, yet I gathered, from what I heard and saw, that most of them did not take their work very seriously. Their love for their art certainly

did not make them labor at it very assiduously. Some of them did not get up till toward noon; and there were those who sat down to lunch at twelve who would continue at the table and chat on after the meal was finished until three. On the slightest excuse — heat, or clouds, or cold, or the least hint of indisposition — they did not work at all. They apparently believed in waiting for inspiration, and they lived up to their belief most perseveringly. The fact is, they come to Barbizon with a vague hope that, through some subtle influence of Barbizon nature and air, the mantle of Millet will fall on them. They do not realize that Millet made the region great, not the region him; that it is what the artist himself has to give, not the time or the place that is creative of noble pictures; and that, unless the painter has what is fine and beautiful in himself, neither Barbizon nor any other place will supply the inspiration that will produce masterpieces.



VIII

THE HOME OF JOAN OF ARC



THE birthplace and girlhood home of Joan of Arc, peasant-saint and noblest of all French heroines, was Domremy, a village in the hilly eastern department of the Vosges. The Vosges is a poor country compared with most parts of France; but such is nearly always the nature of the region that produces saints. Comfort and wealth and adjacency to the great towns are not congenial, apparently, to growths so delicate.

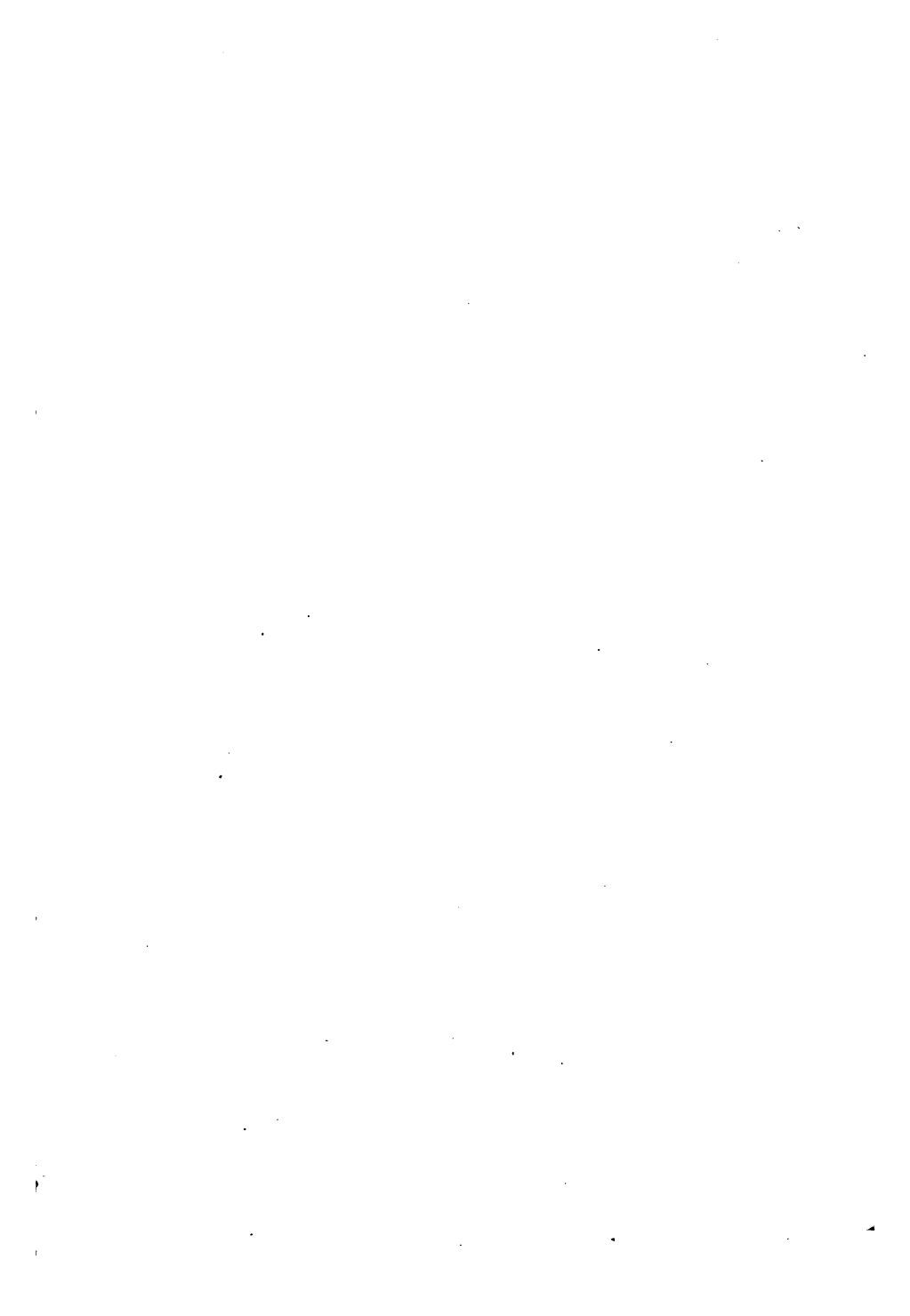
Domremy is off the main routes of travel, yet pilgrims resort to it from all parts of France and from all over the world; for Joan of Arc is not a French heroine alone — she belongs to the whole human race.

All nations honor her, and none render homage more

heartily than the English, her ancient foes. Paris was my starting point when I essayed to visit Domremy, and I found the route a very zigzag one. A number of changes were necessary, and considerable tedious waiting at junctions. I was on the way all the afternoon and far into the evening, and was a little discouraged when I left the train at Maxey, the railroad station nearest Domremy, to learn that the place I sought was still two miles away, and that there was no conveyance thither. I was in an unknown country, and it was night. I did not enjoy the situation, but there was no help for it.

The station master came with his lantern to the station door and gave me directions, and I walked away into the darkness. Maxey was only a little place, its streets deserted at this hour, houses black, save for here and there a lighted window, farmyard odors on the air, and the most noticeable sound the tinkle of water running from spouts into unseen troughs. On the outskirts of the hamlet I met a laborer who pointed out a short cut to Domremy across the fields, and I left the main road and followed a vague, winding meadow-way. Luckily, a quarter-moon shone in the west, or I should have had serious difficulty in keeping to the path's uncertain markings.

I was on a wide lowland plain with hills round about. On the distant slopes I could see, here and there, dark





THE STATUE BEFORE THE CHURCH

patches of wood, but the valley was all open farm-land, with only stray trees and scattered groves. Through the meadows flowed the river Meuse, a leisurely stream, often looping and turning back on itself, and at times expanding into reedy marshes. Somewhere there was a dam, for through the dim quiet of the night I could hear the noisy overflow of water.

The meadows were half mown, and the hay from a few of the fields had gone to the barns; but it was the beginning of the harvest, and usually such grass as had been cut lay in swaths, as left by the scythes of the mowers, or gathered in heaps to shed the dew and possible rain awaited spreading and further drying on the morrow.

The stillness and mystery of the hour, with the pale lustre of the thin moon shining down on the damp meadows, were conducive to dreaming, and I thought of the old-time heroine whose fame had drawn me thither, realizing with a certain wonder and elation that this was her home region, and that I was treading a path she very likely had trod many times long, long ago, that in these meadows she had worked, that somewhere in that dark grove of trees on ahead was a village — Joan's village! It seemed very fitting that she should have lived amid these surroundings in a region so retired, in a landscape of such gentle repose, with its broad levels and its protecting hills sweeping low

along the horizon. Did she not catch from her environment some of her own brave, simple spirit? What a pity that the voices should have come to draw her away from the tranquil, pastoral life that was before her and plunge her into the midst of battles and intrigues and falsity! It is true that thus she won glory, but there was also the dreadful death at the stake. The story is one of strange contrast and pathos—and the tragedy of her early end, however we regard it, was perhaps necessary to make her fame secure. Had long life been granted there might have developed mistakes and weakness. We could not be sure her self-sacrificing courage would have come down to us so unsullied, to win for her the warm place she now has in the hearts of humanity.

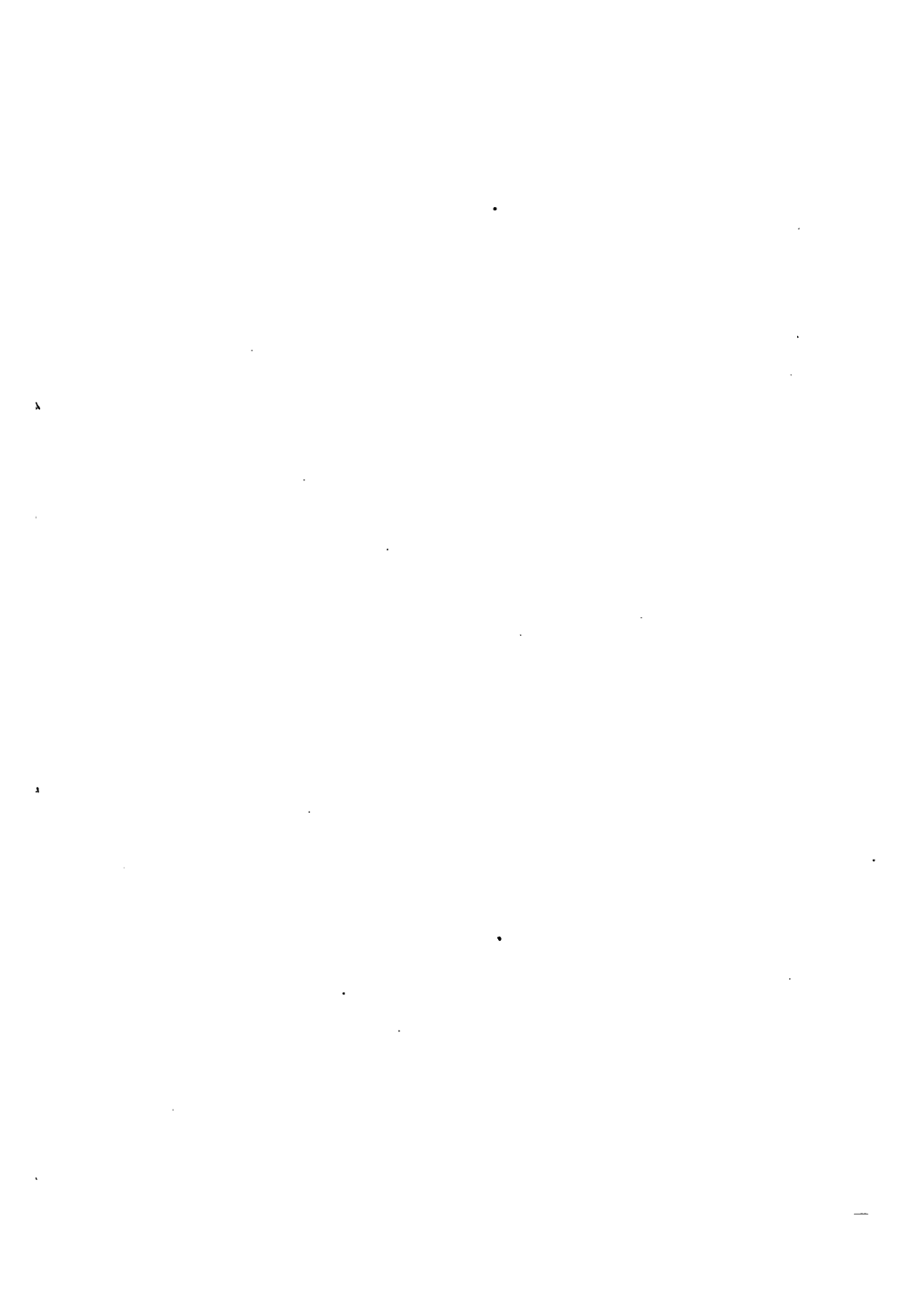
When I reached Domremy I found it hardly less silent and lonely than the plain. It was the exact counterpart of Maxey—street deserted, a few dim lights in house windows and a steady, musical flow of water from spouts into outdoor troughs. I kept on till I came to the church, near which I discovered a building that bore the sign of a hotel. I went in and fumbled through a dark hall to a door that let me into the kitchen. There I found a light burning, and a man and woman sitting, their day's work done, in drowsy meditation before the fire. They were dazed by my sudden intrusion, and it took

me some time with my broken French to make them comprehend that I wanted a room and board for several days. Such a request from a tourist was rare. The place has many visitors, but nearly all come and go the same day. They do not care to loiter in this out-of-the-way little place. When I finally made my intentions clear, an extra candle was exhumed, and I was conducted to an apartment upstairs. My chamber had a decided individuality. It was large and had bare white plaster walls. In one corner was a long, substantial table and in each of two other corners a bed overhung by a lofty red canopy. The beds, independent of the canopies, were two-story affairs, and it was a problem just how to climb into them. On top of each was a fluffy feather mattress rather more than a foot thick. These overlying feather constructions might just as well have been packed away during the warm summer months, but I suppose the housewives take too much pride in them to sanction such a proceeding.

The next morning I began my rambling, which by the time I left made me very well acquainted with the hamlet and the habits of its people, and with the region lying round about. The village is a farming community just as it always has been from the time of Joan of Arc to the present. Its size has varied little with the passing of the centuries, and its homes and the ways of its people are simple and primitive.

Every inhabitant, if we except the priest and a colony of nuns, works in the fields. The keepers of the shops, inns, and hotel have their land and their cattle like the rest, and when their indoor business can spare them they turn to their farm labor as naturally as if it was habitual.

The farm buildings are very much concentrated. House, barn, and stables are all under one expansive tile roof, and a whole line of such domiciles join walls along the street. In their great size and look of age and lack of windows they savor of mediævalism. The barn is the centre and heart of a house structure, and its big, sagging, wooden doors are a prominent feature of the house front. From the broad barn floor you can step at once into the dwelling-rooms on the one side or into the stables on the other. The height of the building is usually two or two and one-half stories, and if you look in at the barn doors you find the space beautifully vast in its high, cobwebby gloom. The house part rarely occupies a section clear to the roof, but ordinarily has a hay-loft over it, just as do the stables on the other side of the barn floor. There is need of all the barn room, for crops are stored indoors, and you never see stacks of hay and grain in the fields of the Vosges, as in warmer and more fertile districts. The stables are low and dark, and show a decided lack of convenience. The only way to





GETTING READY TO GO TO THE FIELDS

remove the manure is to load it on a wheelbarrow and trundle it out by hand. That is the daily task of the lady of the house. She adds the loads to the accumulating heap in the front yard, and there the hens delight to scratch all day. It is a square, well-made heap mixed with straw litter, but it speaks rather loudly for itself in warm weather. The spare space in front of the house is also the receptacle for a variety of farm machines, the wood-pile, and for whatever odds and ends it is handy to leave there. When a house has no space between it and the street, some arrangement for a farmyard in the rear of the premises is a necessity, but that is plainly not as convenient as to have everything right before the house door, open to the public way. Looks seemed not to count.

Nearly all the farmers kept both ducks and chickens, and the fowls at night staid somewhere about the stables. To make ingress and egress easy for them and for the cats, a hole was cut at the base of one of the barn doors.

The dwelling part of these great farm structures, as seen from the street, is apt to have but a single door and window. The window is curtained and perhaps has plants in it. Frequently it is tasteful and attractive, but Domremy fashion decrees that under it, inside, shall be a sink, and this sink connects with a stone spout or trough which conveys the waste water

to the open air. The spout projects out from beneath the window sill, and its tricklings find their way as best they can, more or less directly, to the street gutter.

House walls are whitewashed, though as often in tones of sober drab as in the natural white. Occasionally there are vines creeping up the walls about the house doors, and when this is the case the attractiveness of the premises is decidedly enhanced. The tile roofs, too, are always pleasing with their varied shades of red and tawny gray, and their wrinkled irregularity. Home interiors are simple to the point of barrenness. There is very little furniture, almost never an easy-chair, and almost never a picture. But there is sure to be a handsome, tall clock and some capacious, metal-trimmed, hardwood wardrobes, and on the mantel above the fireplace are brass candlesticks and an array of colored crockery. Stoves of the American type are in common use in some parts of France, but at Domremy the broad old fireplaces that gape across half a roomside are the rule. I liked to walk through the village in the evening and get glimpses through open house doors of the fires on the low stone hearths furnishing all the light for the dusky rooms. There was something very cheerful and domestic about the flicker, and the changing shadows, and the humble family life. Some of the household would be gathered

around the table, a woman was perhaps lifting a black pot off the crane or laying fresh fuel on the coals beneath; on a bed in the corner the baby lay asleep, and over all played the glow of that open home fire.

In the centre of the village, where the main road parts and one branch crosses the Meuse by a stone bridge to the meadows, and another turns off toward the western hill slopes, stands the church. It is broad and heavy and is fronted by a stumpy tower. Above the main entrance is a great allegorical picture painted on canvas, tacked snug against the wall. The painting contains many figures, including Joan of Arc and divers saints and angels, and its unusual size, strong coloring, and strange placing catch the stranger's attention at once, and all pilgrims stop to study its probable significance. To the left of the entrance, on a high pedestal, is a bronze statue of Joan, and around on the other side of the church, at the time of my visit, was piled against the wall a great heap of brush. The brush was tied in bundles, as if in readiness for the burning of some modern martyr, but I suppose it was really the peaceful property of the dweller in a neighboring farmhouse.

The church tower had a clock on it, and a single pointer indicated rather vaguely the time. After the usual manner of French clocks this Domremy time-piece struck the hours twice with a short pause between

the two series. The idea is, that if it struck only the first series, as do our clocks, the mind, so apt to be preoccupied with other things, would not be alert enough to begin with the initial stroke and count through with certainty. The preliminary series is needed to warn a person to make ready to count on the repeat.

Just beyond the church is the Joan of Arc cottage, an ugly building which has no charm in itself or in its surroundings. It looks more like a big shed than anything else, for the roof all slants one way from a very high wall at the front to a very low one at the back. The inside is kept as a museum, and it has all a museum's blankness and stiffness, with no suggestion of its ever having been occupied as a home. The old garden at the rear, with its narrow paths and little plots of flowers and vegetables, happily has a real touch of humility. You can fancy it is not unlike what it was in Joan's day, and the mind easily calls up the scene in those twilight hours of long ago when the simple shepherd maiden stood in this selfsame garden and heard mingled with the ringing of the bells from the near church those mysterious voices speaking to her.

Three-fourths of a mile to the south of Domremy, on a hill slope overlooking the broad levels of the valley, stands a basilica with a slender golden spire, marking the spot where tradition says Joan first



PUTTING AN EDGE ON HIS SCYTHE



received the command from her voices to join the army and deliver France from its enemies. In the near view the building has a pomp and pretention not at all in keeping with its rural surroundings nor with the simple character of the peasant girl it glorifies. I only saw it once when it seemed to me truly beautiful and impressive. Conditions favored. It was late in the afternoon, and the lower part of the basilica was shadowed by the steep western hill, while the golden spire, touched by the rays of the setting sun, became a wand of flame against the sky.

To follow the winding, ascending way that leads through the farm-lands from the village to the basilica imbues one with the genuine pilgrim feeling. You have the company of others making the journey, some on foot and some in carriages; they go and come all day long, singly, in groups, and at times in processions. A cross, halfway, bearing a life-size figure of Christ, gives the road emphasis as a pilgrim route and you feel transformed by some magic of the region half a thousand years or more into the past. Yet after all you get only a tincture, only a reminiscence, of the old days; for those early pilgrimages, especially when the destination was the Holy Land, entailed very real hardships, and they took a weary length of time. Most of the pilgrims did their travelling on foot with a long staff in the hand, a broad black hat on the head,

and for the body a black or gray gabardine girt with a leather belt. Millions of such pilgrims made their lagging way to Jerusalem, and a large per cent of those who started lost their lives either going or returning. Our latter-day pilgrimages, in which one is rushed to his destination on a railroad train, and comfortably looks about and pays his respects at the pilgrim shrine, and then is whirled back home with no exertion on his part, are very pale affairs.

The basilica on the Domremy hillside, with its elaboration of architectural detail and its ornamentation of gold and color, stands where formerly the tall trees grew. Nature's woodland temple has been replaced by this gorgeous church, and I do not think any one will ever hear voices from the other world there again.

The valley as I looked down on it from the basilica lay spread out before me like a map. There were the roadways with their thin lines of soldierly poplars, the tree-clumps and bushes marking the winding course of the river, the red-roofed villages, and the broad grasslands busy everywhere with hay-makers. As many women were in the hay-fields as men, but their work was mostly confined to turning, raking, and opening. In some cases they handled the hay on the loads, but they never did the heaviest work — the mowing or the pitching on.

Nearly all the grass is cut and cared for by hand, though mowing-machines and horse-rakes are owned by a few of the more progressive farmers. There were men in the meadows swinging their great broad-bladed scythes all day. It was in the morning hours, however, that they were busiest, coats off, and frequently bareheaded, advancing slowly, but steadily, across the fields and laying low the daisy-spangled grass. Labor began before sunrise, and when the last loads came trundling in at about eight o'clock in the evening there were still stray workers scattered about the meadow who would keep to their tasks as long as daylight lasted.

In many parts of France two-wheeled carts, very high and very ponderous, are the only ones in common use for heavy farm work, but at Domremy the type of cart in favor was low and had four wheels. When two horses, or, as was often the case, three, were attached to a wagon, they were hitched tandem, never abreast. Sometimes the team was made up of a horse and an ox, the former the leader, and the latter between the shafts. When a hay-cart went to the fields in the early morning or just after the noon lunch, it was apt to be the conveyance of the whole farm family — men and women, old and young, sitting square on the floor or perched along on the side racks. But it seemed to be necessary that one man

should walk beside the team to do the driving; for even if the two or three draught animals were all horses, they were driven much as if they were oxen. A single line attached to the bridles hung on the left-hand side of the team, though it was seldom used except in turning corners. The driver depended in the main on his commands and exclamations, and on the cracking of his long-lashed whip.

One of the most common sounds that came to my ears from the street, when I was in my room at my hotel was the ring of hammer blows on iron. This was made by men sitting before their house doors sharpening their scythes. I do not think any farmer in the village had a grindstone, but it was not necessary. To sharpen his tool he laid the edge of the broad blade on a heavy-headed spike driven in a block of wood, and pounded the scythe edge sharp with a light hammer. The spike had a flange on it midway, so that when the mower used it in the fields it could be driven in the ground and hammered on without sinking in too far to be serviceable. Some mowers carried a whetstone slung from the belt in a cow's horn sheath, but the spike and the hammer were the favorite implements when the scythe got dull.

We had a flurry of rain one afternoon. Dark clouds had been reaching up across the sky for an hour, and presently the storm broke, big drops pelted thick and



A HAY WAGON



fast, and there was a rumble of thunder accompanied by flashes of lightning. The great meadows around the village were full of haymakers. They had seen indications at noon that the storm clouds were gathering, and had eaten hasty lunches and hurried to the fields to save the hay. They got some of it into tumbles, and a few half-loads on the wagons. Then the rain came and sent them scurrying back to the village, the first comers comparatively dry, the later arrivals well bedraggled. The poultry that inhabited the streets had promptly sought shelter, all the spouts from the conduits of the broad roofs gushed with water, and the wayside gutters became brooks. But the shower was soon past, the chickens and ducks reappeared, and the men and women put on their wooden shoes and spent the rest of the day working about their homes.

Mornings the village was always enlivened with processions of cows on the way to pasture, with horses and colts being led to the watering troughs, and with certain pigs which were apparently let out for an airing. But the event most pastoral and interesting was the start of the sheep for the day's grazing. From some byway a shepherd appeared accompanied by two black dogs and a few goats and sheep. The man blew a long horn at every corner, and barn doors opened here and there, and from each farm dwelling

came additions to the flock until there were a hundred or two of the sheep and a goodly sprinkling of the shaggy goats. Now they wended their way out into the country to some waste fields on the western slopes where they would feed until evening.

I visited the shepherd on his hillside one day. He wore sabots and patched blue overalls. Slung from his shoulder was his horn and a black bag containing his lunch and a bottle of wine. In his hand, always ready for service, he carried a staff with a small iron hook and a scoop on the end. The hook he could deftly slip around the hind leg of one of the creatures when he wished to catch it. The scoop he used to shovel up pebbles and bits of earth to throw at the constantly wandering flock. It was a very effective warning, and with the intelligent help of his dogs he did not have to move about much himself. Often he sat and meditated, looking off across the green landscape.

Toward night the bleating flock came straggling back along the lanes to the village. The dogs barked, the horn blew, the sheep ran hither and thither about the street, barn doors were thrown open, housewives appeared, and excitement reigned. But it was only for a few minutes. The sheep knew their homes, and little coveys of them separated from the main flock of their own accord, to seek their accustomed stables,

till none were left save three or four younglings whose memories had failed them. There they were, their usual companions gone, homeless and forlorn on the street. They were in a panic, their wits left them entirely, and they never would be able to find their proper domiciles were they not driven and persuaded. Their mistresses were after them, however, and I saw one of the reluctant lambs walked off by a woman who gripped it by its hind legs and pushed it along in the way it should go, as if it had been a wheelbarrow. The youngest of the stragglers on the same occasion was picked up by another woman and carried off in her arms.

In most places that I visited in France, I was fortunate enough to find some one who could talk English, but I could learn of no such linguist in Domremy. Some one suggested, in response to my inquiries, that the sister superior at the convent could speak my language, but when I went to the convent to seek that dignitary, and questioned its sober, coiffured inhabitants, they shook their heads and bowed me outside the gates of their citadel with evident relief. I felt as if I had been trespassing. Perhaps I had, but I had jangled the bell at the door in the street wall in vain, and then, as it happened not to be latched, I had pushed it open and crossed the threshold. There I was in a gravelled courtyard, and I was looking

about doubtfully, trying to make up my mind what to do next when one of the spooks of the place opportunely appeared. It may be a question whether the term "spooks," as applied to the nuns, is judicious, but it very well describes the impression they made on me. Their dress and manner of life were, to my mind, distressingly unworldly and unnatural, and their funeral garments, prayer-books, beads, and images, gave them the air of making piety a business, while their barren, walled-in buildings looked like jails. It seemed as if the happiness of the young girls in the charge of these silent, frigid figures must be very much curtailed.

After my discomfiture at the convent gate, I blundered into the presence of the nuns yet again. It was evening, and I was returning from a walk in the fields, when I heard singing from within the church. A service was in progress, and I decided to attend. The one pointer of the clock on the tower indicated that it was a trifle after eight o'clock, and the night was dull and clouded. I expected to step from the outer dusk into a brightly lighted interior. Instead, I found myself in dense gloom, relieved only by one faint little taper fastened against a stone pillar. This tiny spark revealed vaguely many mysterious figures kneeling among the seats in the middle of the church. I made my way hesitatingly to a bench at the extreme rear, and sat down unnoticed. As my eyes grew more





THE PUPILS FROM THE CONVENT

accustomed to the darkness, I could make out dimly the vaulted arches of the ceiling, some colored windows beyond the altar, a statue above the little taper, and I saw that the congregation was composed of young women and girls, several nuns, and half a dozen white-capped old women. I was the lone man in the assemblage, and I would not have been surprised had I been asked to leave.

The singing which was in progress when I entered was followed by a long recitative — a chanting medley of sound that to my ears was not unlike the evening music of a frog pond. They went through it unhesitatingly, and I wondered that they were able to retain all its dull length in memory so accurately. Presently one of the nuns began to read from a prayer-book, and then I saw there was a second light in the room, for this nun had a candle, and when she held it up to illumine the page she was reading, it shone into her hood, and on the cloth's transparent folds it cast fantastic shadows from her features.

At the close of the service, when the worshippers filed out from the church, I found they were nearly all private scholars of the convent school. The only village farm folk were three or four children and a few old women. These scattered to their homes, while the school, two by two, beginning with the tallest girls, who may have attained the age of sixteen or eighteen, and

ending with the youngest, who were eight or ten, marched away, officered by the nuns, down a side lane back to the convent. They always came and went by that lane, save on Sundays, when, in honor of the day, or as a special privilege to the scholars, they passed through the main street.

Sunday was observed by the villagers after the usual French manner, as one of mixed work, play, and devotion, and the devotion was both last and least. The Sabbath I was at Domremy was a good hay day, and nearly all the able-bodied peasantry were in the fields. The wagons came rolling in from the meadows to the village barns with their loads the whole day through, until darkness put an end to the operations. Yet labor was not quite as general as on week days, for I noticed that a good deal of fishing was going on in the river Meuse, and that more men than usual resorted to the inns. A good deal of the fishing was done by boys, but I do not think their amateur angling was very successful. Nets seemed to meet with better reward. A party of three or four with their nets would usually return at the end of half a day or so with about two fish, weighing from one to four pounds each. The rest of the day the fishers would spend in showing their prizes to their friends, and telling them how they did it. Business at the inns began at noon, when the landlords, after a morning spent in the hay-

fields, got into their best clothes and took down their shutters. Too many were still engaged in field labor for trade to really thrive, yet after all, fair-sized groups gathered at the inns, where they drank, smoked, played cards, and talked the hours away, with evident satisfaction.

I attended morning mass at the village next to the south. I was early; but the day was hot, and I was glad to get into the cool twilight of the church and sit and wait. The only other person present was the gray old sexton. He was reaching up from behind the altar and taking down the tall candles one by one, snuffing, and otherwise putting them in order and replacing them. At ten o'clock a small boy came in, threw his wide straw hat at a seat, took a grip on one of the bell-ropes dangling in the rear of the room, and tolled the bell a few strokes. Then he came over and looked at me long and attentively. That accomplished to his satisfaction, he returned to his bell. There were three bell-ropes, and presently more boys came and joined the first, and helped ring the chimes. They enjoyed the task thoroughly, and they made the bells send forth all the clamor of which they were capable. It was a kind of gymnastic performance on the part of the boys, and they went through it like so many jumping-jacks. For variety, they sometimes clung to the rope on its recoil, and let it carry them up in the

air four or five feet. That was like flying, and the resounding thump of their heavy shoes on the paving, when they returned to earth, rejoiced their hearts. Occasionally one would break his downward journey by putting his feet on a pew-back, and then allowing himself to sag off sideways. The congregation had now begun to stroll in, but no one paid any attention to the boys. When the time came for services, the youngsters desisted, with some reluctant final flourishes, and went off to the chancel to put on their robes and help the priest before the altar. There was no organ, but the chanting was harmonious, and the decorous formalities of the service were not unpleasing. The audience kept increasing till nearly time for the benediction, but even when the last of the eleventh-hour worshippers had come, the church was but thinly filled. No doubt the number would have been much larger had it not been such good hay weather.

The next morning I left Domremy. I made an early start, for I had a long journey before me; but, though I was up at four o'clock, the village was already bestirring itself, and its people were beginning to appear on the street. At five, just as I left my hotel to walk to the station, the Angelus rang from the church tower. Work had begun in earnest by then. Hay wagons were being unloaded in the barns, there were men before the house fronts pounding out a

sharp edge on their scythes, and the women were getting breakfast, or were milking in the stables, or were driving the cows to pasturage in the meadow enclosures. In the fields were laborers plodding along the paths on their way to work, and mowers swinging their scythes through the dewy grass ; and that was the last impression I had of the homeland of Joan of Arc — peaceful meadows and hills and stream, and peasant workers beginning their day's labor under a clouded sky threatening rain.



IX

ON THE BORDERS OF SAVOY



IT was evening. All day we had been speeding across the monotonous plains of central France, but these were now left behind, and we were beginning to encounter the outlying foothills of the Alps. My destination was Bellegarde, still far away, the last stop on the route before the express train for Geneva, on which I was travelling, entered Switzerland. When I looked out into the dusky moonlight of the night, I could see that we were following up a narrow valley bordered by steep hills, and occasionally there were great up-thrusting turrets of rocks crowning the slopes like vast and ruinous old castles. In the hollow was a brawling mountain stream full of boulders, its shores strewn

with windrows of waterworn stones and pebbles. But the stream had its spells of quiet, where it crept along in pool-like reaches and mirrored the adjoining landscape's slender poplar trees and the hills and castellated rocks. Now and then a little village hugged the face of one of the big cliffs, usually a manufacturing place with some white-walled mills in its midst.

So we went on through the moonlit night until half-past ten, when we reached Bellegarde, where I alighted and had my drowsiness shaken off by the tumult of a custom-house examination conducted by government officers in the railway station. As soon as I was released bag and baggage, I sought the nearest hotel and retired.

The next day was clear and warm. If one sat within doors and had the windows open a little breeze wandered in that was comfortably cooling, but for the pedestrian who chose to ramble near and far as I did, the weather was decidedly hot, and the white, chalky roads were blinding in the sunlight.

The country about Bellegarde was wrinkled into a great medley of monster hills and valleys, while lofty mountain ranges loomed on the horizon. Winding in and out through the lowest valley depths was the river Rhone, a tumult of hurrying green water, seething and boiling along in a manner very unlike the serene leis-

ure of the other French rivers I had known. It seemed a very demon of a stream, and perhaps with reason, for it was bearing to the sea the spirits of the Alpine glaciers that for thousands of years had been held imprisoned in the ice-fields of the mountain tops. No wonder that they should be in a frenzy of haste to reach their old home, the ocean. The river was not broad, but it must have been deep, for it gave a sense of immense power. In the Bellegarde neighborhood it flows for a long distance through a narrow, high-cliffed gorge that it has carved for itself down into the strata of the chalky rock. The gorge drops from the ordinary valley levels suddenly and without any preliminary shelving, and at a little remove you lose sight not only of the stream, but of its channel as well; the landscape appears to be without a break, and if it were not for the roar of the waters you would have no suspicion of the river's existence.

I crossed the stream twice in my walk that first morning, once by the high arches of a stone bridge near the town, and again, some distance down the valley, by a slender wooden footbridge that connected two small villages. The latter crossing was deep in the shadowed chasm, and I had to descend to it by a steep, zigzag path. From the bridge I could look down on the writhing turmoil of the waters and up to the great crags which overhung the narrow channel.



THE RHONE AT BELLEGARDE



On the summit of the cliffs was a fringe of bushes, and, at one point, several cottages peeped over the verge of the precipice.

Bellegarde is a frontier town, and all its highways and even its most secluded byways are guarded by revenue officers. No loopholes are left for the entry of contraband goods. Thus, when I reached the farther side of this little bridge across the Rhone I came to a diminutive hut, before the door of which stood a uniformed official. He stopped me and asked if I had a bicycle. I did not comprehend very clearly what he wanted, and he had me step inside his sentry box and read a notice which said no one could come into French territory on a bicycle without a permit, and this permit would cost sixty centimes. I certainly showed no signs of having a bicycle, and the sentinel's challenge seemed hardly necessary, especially as a man would have to risk his neck to get his machine down and up the attenuated and precipitous pathways on either side of the stream. Probably the guard, in his French love of talk, simply wanted to relieve the tedium of his position by a little visiting. He was quite ready to take my word for it that I had no wheel concealed about my person, and, that matter settled, he very sociably volunteered information concerning points of interest in the neighborhood. He had a lonely time, no doubt, in that shadowy canyon,

and must have envied the more stirring life of his fellow officials posted in Bellegarde town.

The squad most in evidence there, aside from that which kept watch on the passengers arriving by train, was one stationed where the main highway from the Swiss direction comes over a bridge that spans one of the branches of the Rhone. From a guardroom by the roadside the officials looked out on the highway, and no person or vehicle entered the town without being seen by them. Once in a while a passer was challenged. It might be a woman with a market basket on her arm; it might be a man trundling a bag of sawdust on a wheelbarrow, or a driver jogging past with an empty keg in his cart. The cloth covering the basket is lifted, and the guard takes a critical look at its contents; the man with the sawdust waits while a rapier is brought out and thrust through the bag to betray the presence of any smuggled goods that are possibly concealed within; and in the case of the empty keg in the cart a guard must needs climb up and have a look in at the bunghole. I did not think the duties of the revenue officers were very arduous. Their challenging and their investigations seemed to be undertaken more for their personal entertainment than for anything else, or just to keep up a reputation for attending to business.

The section of the town in which the guardhouse

was situated lay in part across the stream, and the bridge was a busy thoroughfare. All sorts of folks were coming and going — bareheaded school children, and men and women of high degree and low ; and there were carts and carriages and now and then a slow ox-team. Somewhere near there was a bakery, and whenever I was in the vicinity toward evening I found many of the passers burdened with great round loaves of bread. The loaves were in form very like monster doughnuts, each with a hole in the middle, making it very convenient to carry them hung on the arm. The most ingenious use of the hole that I noticed was made by a driver of one of the ox-teams, who was conveying his loaf home safely suspended on a pole of his cart.

In what I saw of the farming round about the town, it seemed to me the tillers of the soil had to contend with great difficulties. There were no levels. All the land was on a slant, often very steep and much broken by ravines and outjutting spurs of rock. Most of the work had of necessity to be done by hand, even if there was the enterprise to use modern machines and the prosperity that could afford them. At this season the men were busy with their scythes mowing the little grass-fields, or, with the help of the women, were spreading, turning, raking, and getting in the hay. Their tools, compared with the lightness and grace of

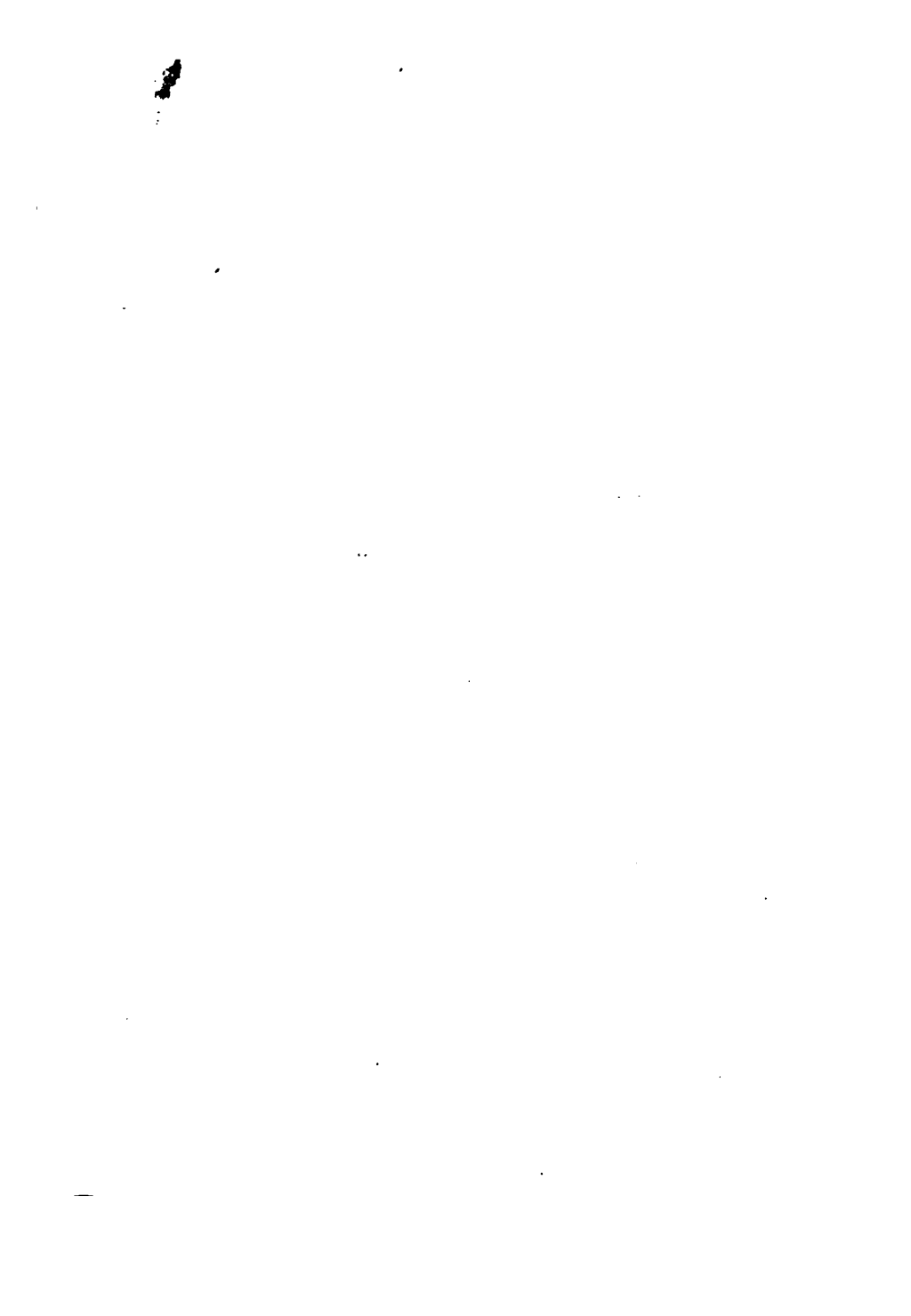
those commonly used in America, were curiously clumsy. The rakes, for instance, had perfectly straight handles, and at the working end a double set of teeth, one set on either side of the crosspiece. The theory seemed to be that the workers were as likely to put their rakes down wrong side up as right, and this double row of teeth was provided so there could be no wrong side.

✓ The forks used were not so angular as the rakes, but were hardly less primitive. They were wholly of wood, had three curved, wide-spreading tines, were all very large, and some of them enormous. The especial purpose of the biggest forks was to enable a man to pick up and carry great heaps of hay on his shoulders from the less accessible plots to those more favorably situated. Sometimes he conveyed the hay in that way clear to the house-barn. Usually, however, if a man had to carry his hay on his back any considerable distance to reach home he packed it into a big blanket. Blanket transportation was resorted to more, higher among the mountains than immediately about Bellegarde, where most of the farmers had oxen and brought their hay from the fields, up or down the steeps, as the case might be, in little jags on their clumsy ox-carts.

The manner of attaching the oxen to the carts was peculiar, and I thought rather harassing. The yoke



A HOUSE-PORCH



was not on the oxen's shoulders, but was strapped to their horns and rested on their heads just over the ears. You could not help fancying that the jolting of the cart must make the yoke thus placed quite distressing at times, yet the oxen seemed as well pleased to have it there as anywhere, and the ponderous tranquillity which characterizes their race appeared not even to be disturbed by the femininity of wearing veils. Veils were the fashion for oxen in that part of the country, and every creature had one. They were a kind of screen of strings intended to keep the flies out of the eyes, and as the heads of the oxen were fast to the yoke so that they could not free themselves from the troublesome pests, the veils were humane and necessary.

In favorable spots on the Bellegarde hillsides there were vineyards set full of slender stakes about a yard high that were fast being hidden by the green vines. Each vine's this year's sprouts all grew from a stub cut back within a foot of the ground. In the newer vineyards the stubs were hardly noticeable, but in some of the older ones they had attained a considerable size, and showed that their years were many. The vines were set so thickly that a person could barely walk between them. No weeds were allowed to grow in the vineyards, and the women were constantly at work in them hoeing and mellowing the

ground, tying the straggling shoots with wisps of straw to the upright stakes, and otherwise caring for the vines.

One afternoon I climbed in the swelter of the clear sunshine far up the steep of a great hill slope to a little village that had as a background a big mountain range seamed with stony ravines. The farm buildings of this and all the other villages of the region were quite different from those of the north where I had been travelling previously. They betokened a warmer climate and sought protection from the heat by allowing the roof to project all around far out from the walls. On the side of the house most exposed to the sun the roof was continued still more to make a kind of shed sheltering a veranda, the house entrance, racks of tools, and gatherings of rubbish. The door to the living-room was usually in the second story up a flight of outdoor stairs and opened on the veranda. This little upstairs porch was a very good place to sit and work, and it was utilized, more or less, by all the family; but it was essentially a kitchen adjunct and mainly used by the women. One porch I observed was occupied by a mother sewing and at the same time caring for a small child that she kept from tumbling down the stairs by clasping her feet about its body.

This upland village impressed me strongly with its picturesqueness, but the calling of the inhabitants was

too apparent for unalloyed charm. If truth be told, the farm hamlets throughout the region were best seen from a distance. At close quarters you found them always so dolefully dirty that their streets looked and smelled more like stable-yards than public ways.

I wanted to go farther on up the mountain that afternoon, but now a thunder-storm came gloaming over the vast landscape, warning me back, and under the shadow of its portentous blackness I hastened down a steep pathway that brought me to Bellegarde just in time to escape the downpour.



X

AN ALPINE VALLEY



ALL night the rain fell heavily and the storm still continued when early the following morning I took the train for Chamonix, in the heart of the French Alps. I had been half minded to wait for better weather, but I was not sorry after all that I made the journey when I did, for nothing could have been finer than the changing panorama of the mountains, silent and slumberous amid the gray cloud drift. The summits of all except the lowest ridges were lost to view, and across their broad bases floated detached masses of vapor, sometimes in heavy billows, sometimes in formless mists that grew or dissolved with a dreamy evanescence more like magic than reality.

As we proceeded the clouds lifted higher, the rain grew thinner, and there were patches of blue sky and faint gleams of sunshine. But still the mountains were wrapped in uncertainty. How high they were you could not guess, though you had glimpses of their rocky buttresses so far skyward that you might fancy they were the pillars of the heavens. The lower slopes were wooded, mostly with sombre firs and spruce, yet everywhere there were frequent grassy glades which in their meagre way did service as grazing grounds and mowing land. In the valleys were occasional small manufacturing villages, while farm cottages were scattered not only on the narrow levels bordering the streams, but clung, all along, far up the mountain sides. I did not envy the dwellers on the uplands. It was painful to think of their solitude and of the unceasing climbing up and down to which they were doomed all their days. What a treadmill existence life on those vast steeps must be!

At Le Fayet the railroad came to an end, still twelve miles from Chamonix, and outside the station a small army of omnibuses and carriages were waiting to take the passengers arriving by the train on up the valley. I preferred to walk and approach more leisurely the presence of Mont Blanc and the assemblage of great heights clustering about that monarch of European mountains.

As I left Le Fayet I looked for signs of the flood that a few years before had made the vicinity the scene of one of the most serious Alpine disasters in history. A glacier lake had burst back among the mountains, and devastated in its downrush a beautiful wooded gorge that enters the main valley at this point, sweeping away a hotel with great loss of life and burying the lowlands in mud, rocks, and wreckage. But nature had healed the scars, and there at Le Fayet I could detect no indication of the havoc so recently wrought in the peaceful valley.

The road to Chamonix proved very good, a winding, steadily rising way the whole distance. For the most part it crept along a hillslope high above a mountain torrent, sometimes in the damp dusk of the evergreen woods, sometimes in the open of a cultivated valley basin. The stream in the ravine was opaque and gray with washings of glacier dust, a striking contrast to the brooks coursing down the near ridges. The latter did not have their sources among the ice-fields, and they were as limpid and colorless as it is possible for water to be.

I met frequent workmen on the road — peasants, drivers, quarrymen, and, most numerous of all, for some reason or other, carpenters. The men of this last class were particularly noticeable because of their costume — Tam-o'-Shanter caps, which they wore slouched.



AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

over one eye, and vast, baggy trousers of dark velvet, while at the waist they were girt about with a red scarf. They were big, strapping, dark-visaged fellows, and altogether had a look so brigandish that I felt a trifle anxious when I met them alone in the twilight of the lofty fir woods.

Lumbering is the most important industry of the district, and every now and then I came on a rickety little gray sawmill in some glen where a stream furnished the necessary power. The mills were each equipped with a single saw of the jig variety, working straight up and down in an antiquated saw-pit. Anything more modern was apparently unknown.

Many loaded carts were on the road, scraping along with set brakes down to the railway. Some carried lumber, others stone, and still others were laden with ice from the foot of one of the glaciers. The ice was destined for Geneva, Lyons, and other cities. It has a certain amount of grit in it, but is otherwise very good, and the supply has the advantage of being unlimited and never-failing.

Midway on my journey a blast was set off in some invisible but near quarry. Immediately before, the silence of the wilderness brooded over the valley. Then came that rending explosion and let bedlam loose. The echoes resounded from every cliff and leaped from ridge to ridge, coming back again and

again as if in fruitless search for escape amid that chaos of mountain crags, and it was a long time before the last faint call floated down to me from some far cloud-land height.

The farmhouses and cottages of the region were of the Swiss type, low buildings with wide-reaching shingle roofs. The shingles were quite unlike those we use in America, being much heavier, longer, and clumsier. They were, in fact, simply short boards as thick at one end as at the other. The overlapping was rather loose, and many roofs had flat stones distributed about on them to prevent the shaky construction from blowing away. Under the wide reach of the eaves, against the house walls, it is customary to store the supply of firewood, and some of the more provident peasantry had piles which reached from the ground clear to the rafters.

I had not gone far on my way up the valley when, in momentary lifts of the clouds, I saw streaks of snow in the high mountain hollows. The snow did not look cold, and I could not help fancying it was some colorless powder that had been lightly sifted over the purple heights. The sight of it gave me a rare thrill of pleasure — I was really among the Alps — and the clouded mystery of those lofty precipices with their deep clefts whitened by the eternal snows seemed to me superlatively beautiful. As I went on I began to have





A WAYSIDE CROSS

glimpses of the Mont Blanc group and of snow-streaks broadening upward into wide white expanses that were perfectly unbroken, save for now and then the up-thrust of some isolated crag.

At noon I approached a little village and stopped at a wayside inn for a lunch. From the room where I ate I could look out to the mountains and see reaching down a high valley a great glacier — one among nearly two score that own Mont Blanc as their source. The fascination grew as I gazed. I felt that I could not go farther until I had paid the glacier a visit, and after lunch I started. A young man of the inn went with me as guide. His services were not exactly necessary, but he could speak English, and I was quite ready to pay his price for the privilege of using my mother-tongue. He was a stout, intelligent fellow and a mountain-climber by profession, though still too young to be a full-fledged guide. He had been four times to the top of Mont Blanc, acting as assistant or porter. He said he knew the route perfectly, and the ascent was not difficult. It was customary for those who essayed the climb to go in caravans, but he would go with me alone if I wanted. Later, I made inquiries of other natives of the region as to the Mont Blanc trip, and it was generally agreed that, in the main, the journey was made without encountering any danger at all serious; yet there was always the chance of some

unforeseen catastrophe, as the accidents of the past proved.

Our way to the Glacier des Bossons led up a steep zigzag through the woods and at length brought us out on a little plateau crowning a ridge of the glacial moraine. In the wide gorge down below was the frozen flood from the mountains, streaked with dust and dotted here and there with great stones. Seen from where we stood the ruder features of the ice-stream were so subdued as to make it seem an exceedingly simple matter to walk across its gentle folds to the opposite moraine, the high wall of which, with a serrated fringe of firs along the top, was in plain sight. But when I clambered down the slope of loose grit and stones to the bottom of the moraine, things had a different aspect. To get on to the main body of the ice was in itself no easy matter, for along the shore the ice had melted away and left a decline like the roof of a house. Some steps had been hewn in this ice wall, and by these I ascended. I was not anxious to do any extended exploring alone. It was all too dreadfully slippery; there were damp, chilling emanations in the air, and there were frequent blue fissures that appeared perfectly heartless and altogether too ready to take one to themselves. When I looked up the glacier toward its source, it rose steep and high to a point where, much splintered and broken, it seemed to have

flowed over a great cliff. It was like the frothing down-rush of a herculean waterfall that had been suddenly petrified as it was about to devastate the world.

Many tourists came toiling up to the glacier borders, both men and women. Most of them were on foot, but not infrequently they made the ascent on muleback. The truly aristocratic, who were thoroughly appreciative of the fact that they were climbing among the far-famed Alps, were armed with alpenstocks and had on their heads slouch hats of the sort worn by Swiss mountaineers, with a signet of feathers on the side. The mulebacked tourists reached the glacier quite cool and collected, and after a look this way and that, to take in the situation, were ready to tramp off after their guides across the ice. The plight of the pedestrians was not so cheerful, especially when they were elderly. I noted one white-haired couple arriving, the man ahead towing his exhausted wife with his umbrella. They and all the wilted and panting folk on foot settled down for a long rest before they went farther. They looked as if this vacation work was the hardest they did in all the year.

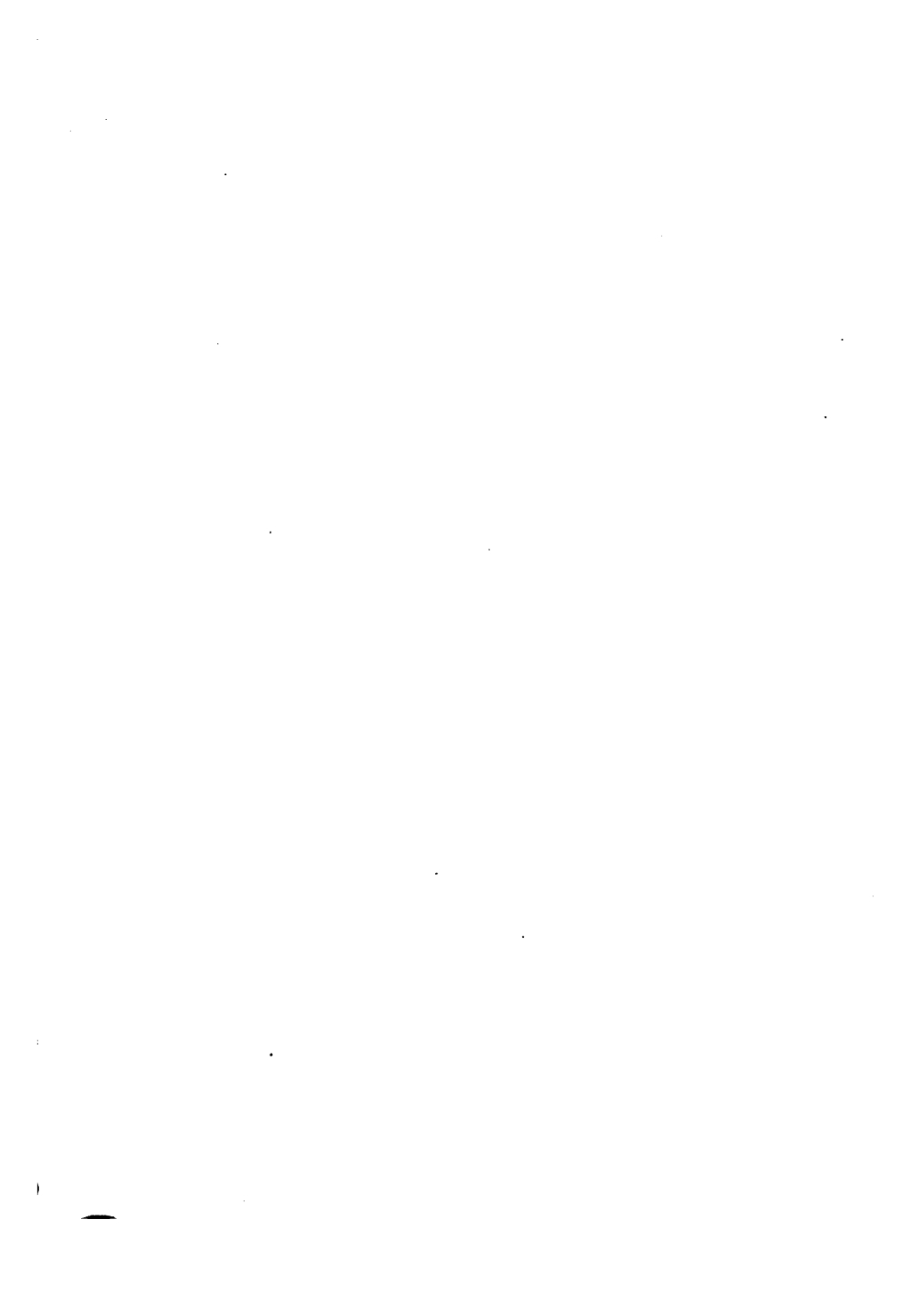
After a time my guide and I retraced our steps to the village in the valley. Just before I parted from him at his inn we heard the faint crash of an avalanche somewhere in the mountain cloudland, and he said that during the heavy snows of winter the sound of

the falling avalanches was almost continuous and often was very loud. In the glen itself, the winters, while not especially severe, were cold enough so that they had snow and travelled on runners for about three months.

It was late in the afternoon when I approached Chamonix, and the cows were coming home, or were being baited in the fields near the houses. The women did most of the cow-tending, and as they walked after the creatures or stood on guard to prevent them from straying, they busied themselves knitting. Usually they had their skirts picturesquely kilted up about them, and the elderly women were sure to have little shawls or kerchiefs pinned over their heads. It was the fashion of the region for each cow to wear a big bell on its neck suspended from a leather strap five or six inches broad. There was a constant "tink, tink," of these sober-toned bells—this music of the mountains—all around the town and even in the streets, for many of the herds passed through the village ways as milking time drew near. I thought that all the precautions of bells and watchers must mean that the cows did most of their feeding high on the unfenced mountain slopes; but I was told that they pastured on the near hillsides, and the bells were worn more as a matter of local custom than as a necessity. The higher grazing lands were used almost wholly by the



OVERLOOKING THE GLACIER DES BOSSONS



Swiss, who come with their flocks over the mountains from their home country every summer.

At the hotel which I chose for my stopping-place there arrived that evening a party of German students — pedestrians, each with a knapsack and an alpenstock proclaiming to all beholders that they were enthusiasts in the art of mountain climbing. The students were enjoying themselves in their touring to the top of their bent, and were overflowing with youthful noise and uncertainty. They were blest with marvellously hearty appetites, and when they sat down to their evening dinner they lingered so long it seemed as if they proposed to stay until it was time for breakfast. But their attention was not given merely to eating; they had no end of things to say to each other, and their conversation was full of eager energy. In their medley of jokes and laughter and planning, half a dozen sometimes talked at once, and it was the same all through their stay — abounding spirits and restless activity. When one thing was finished, and they started on some new project, the excitement reached a white heat, and there was hurry-scurrying all over the premises. If a mountain ascent was to be attempted, there could hardly have been more confusion had it been an expedition to the North Pole. But I liked them, and it seemed to me they were youths of a virile, brainy race. As a result of their presence I

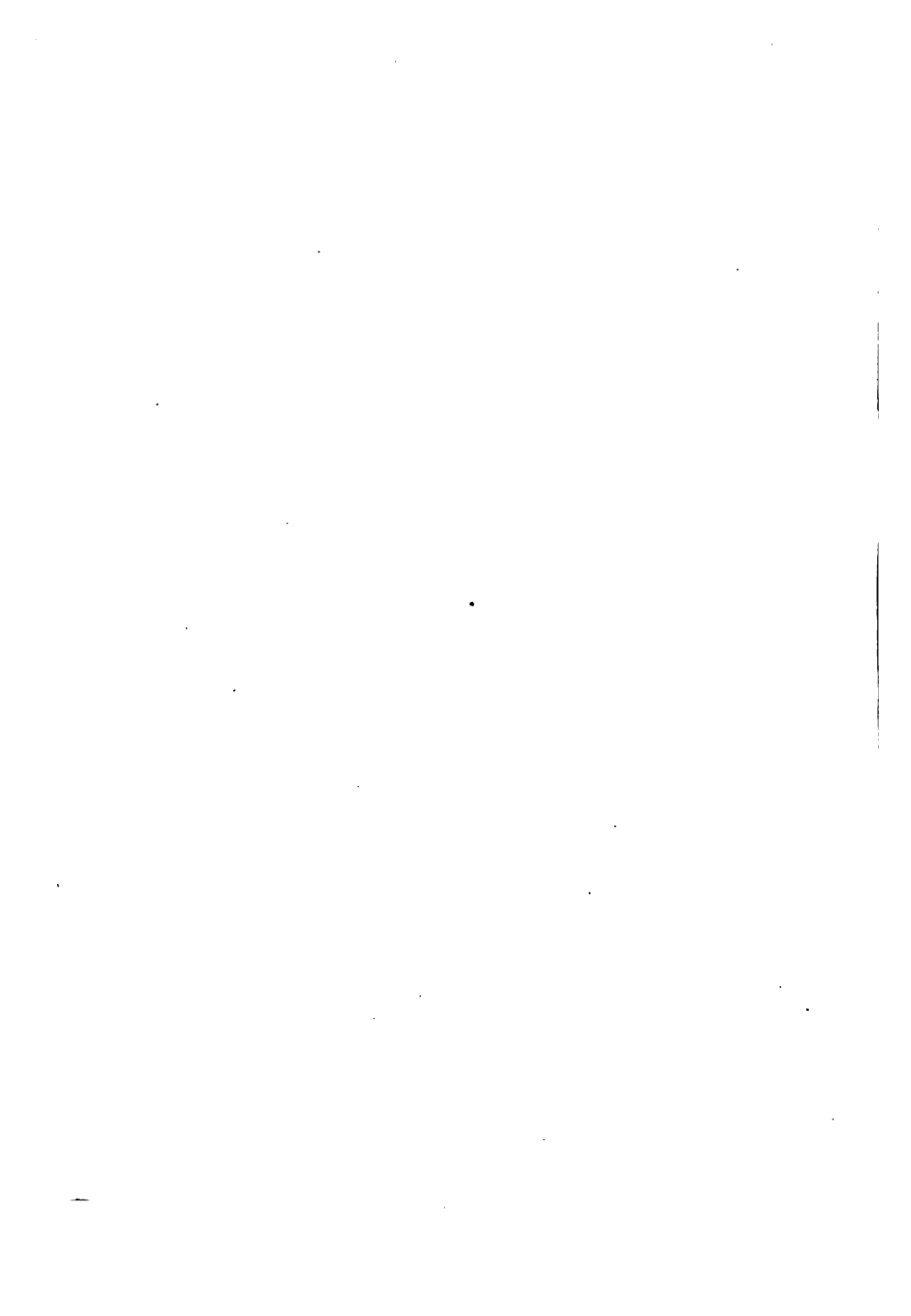
dreamed on the first night of my stay at Chamonix that I became personally acquainted with the German emperor, and, to my surprise, he proved to be very quiet and companionable, domestic and simple in his tastes, and not at all the haughty aristocrat one fancies him to be from current accounts.

When I awoke the next morning, the Kaiser had vanished with the rest of the phantoms of the night, and I was aware by the sounds which drifted in at my open window that the village was beginning to be astir. There were footsteps on the street, indistinct voices, the barking of a dog, the faint dinging of cowbells, and, intermingled with it all, the continuous murmur of the little river, not far distant, hurrying down the hollow of the valley with its gray flood of glacier water. At the same time I heard with a tourist's natural disrelish the patter of rain on the roofs and the gurgle of full water-spouts.

We had a showery forenoon, but signs of brightening were not lacking, and at length some stray rays of sunshine encouraged the Germans to think of starting for a climb. An early lunch was set out for them, and the clan gathered to dispose of it at half-past eleven. They were in a tremendous hurry, and had nearly worried the life out of the landlord and his assistants with their vociferous eagerness to have the lunch at once and be off. I expected to see them clear the table in



FIRST STEPS



about five minutes, and then, with their staffs and other Alpine accoutrements, promptly let themselves loose on their mountain expedition. But between their boyish appetites and the lively flow of their conversation they loitered over the viands and the accompanying bottles for a full hour.

It was the Germans' intention to cross the great glacier of the Mer de Glace, and a while after they had gone, the weather signs continuing promising, it occurred to me that I could not do better than to follow the same trail, and off I started. For a short distance my route was across the level meadows of the valley. Then it went up and up through dripping fir woods, in which the lower limbs of all the trees were festooned with moss hanging in fibrous pendants and giving the forest a look strangely gloomy and ancient. Now and then I crossed a cleared streak, and, feeding on the grasses which grew in these bushy opens, I sometimes saw a tinkling herd of goats apparently perfectly content with their steep pasturage. Presently the path, which for a long time had been skirting around a mountain side, changed its course to a sharp-angled zigzag and so continued to the end. It was knee-racking work going up so unceasingly through the mud, hour after hour. Sometimes I stopped to catch breath and to look back across the deep valley, whence I had come, to the misty heights opposite, their bases clad

with dark woodland which gave way above to rugged crags and white snow-fields. But I never paused long, and finally I began to overtake the Germans. Their line of march had grown straggling, and those less enterprising or of weaker physique had lagged behind the leaders, who could be heard shouting nearly a mile on ahead.

During the latter half of the climb, I passed through several layers of mist, and toward the very end went into a heavy, chilling fog full of rain. I was now on the edge of the permanent snow-line; the woods had become meagre and scraggly, and there were snow-banks by the wayside, while a little higher up all the hollows were filled with drifts. At a height of sixty-three hundred feet above the sea level, and three thousand above that of Chamonix, I reached a big, lonely hotel perched on a mountain cliff overlooking the broad gorge of the Mer de Glace. In a momentary rift of the clouds, I looked down on the ice hillocks of the glacier, and then the gray mists drooped into the vast chasm and blotted it from view.

Three or four of the Germans arrived at the hotel just before I did; and the others, wet and bedraggled, strayed in, one or two at a time, until the waiting-room was well filled. We dried ourselves somewhat before a cheerful open fire, ate refreshments, and bought souvenirs; and the Germans put in their spare moments

in writing to all their relatives postal cards, on which were printed mountain views of the vicinity.

We kept watch of the weather from the windows, and, in time, the mists overhanging the glacier broke up and rolled away, and we started, in spite of a thin rain that was still falling. We had to go down a long, steep descent to reach the ice, and there on its borders we paused to make way for our guide to take his place at the head of the procession. We now looked to him to lead us safely across the glacier's perils, whatever they might be, real and imaginary. The guide carried an axe, and on the more slippery slopes he chipped out rude steps, and gave us a steadying hand. Still, if the path had been clearly defined, so that one could not go astray, there would have been no serious trouble in making the crossing alone. The surface was one vast upheaval of waves—low and rounded for the most part, but sometimes rising into high, sharp crests. As a whole, the effect of this mile-wide glacier, winding down from the distant cloud-hidden Mont Blanc, was that of a broad river in a tumult of leaping and foaming waters.

When we reached the opposite moraine, the guide turned back to recross the ice to the hotel, and we climbed out of the glacial valley and began the long descent to Chamonix. Our path kept along the edge of the moraine, and the wide, still stream of ice in the

chasm was always in sight. For the last half century the Alpine glaciers have been receding, and the ice, which once filled the vast ravine of the Mer de Glace to its brim, has now shrunken a hundred feet or more down into its depths. Débris from the banks has fallen plenteously on the ice flood, and for a considerable distance out from either shore it is hidden and gray.

The path was often very steep, and at one point, where it crept down the face of a craggy declivity, steps had been hewn in the rock, and an iron rail put up, to which we were very glad to cling. About halfway to the valley, we passed a little refreshment shanty, and by our pathside encountered a boy blowing, for our benefit, a horn that was as long as he was. It was not easy for so small a boy to blow so great a horn, but he screwed up his face and did his valorous best; and he managed not only to draw forth a doleful little tune from his instrument, but certain small coins from our pockets, which we bestowed as a token of our appreciation of his exertions. After we left the boy and the refreshment hut, we entered the wet woodland, and an hour's tramping down its muddy, slippery ways brought us to the welcome valley levels.

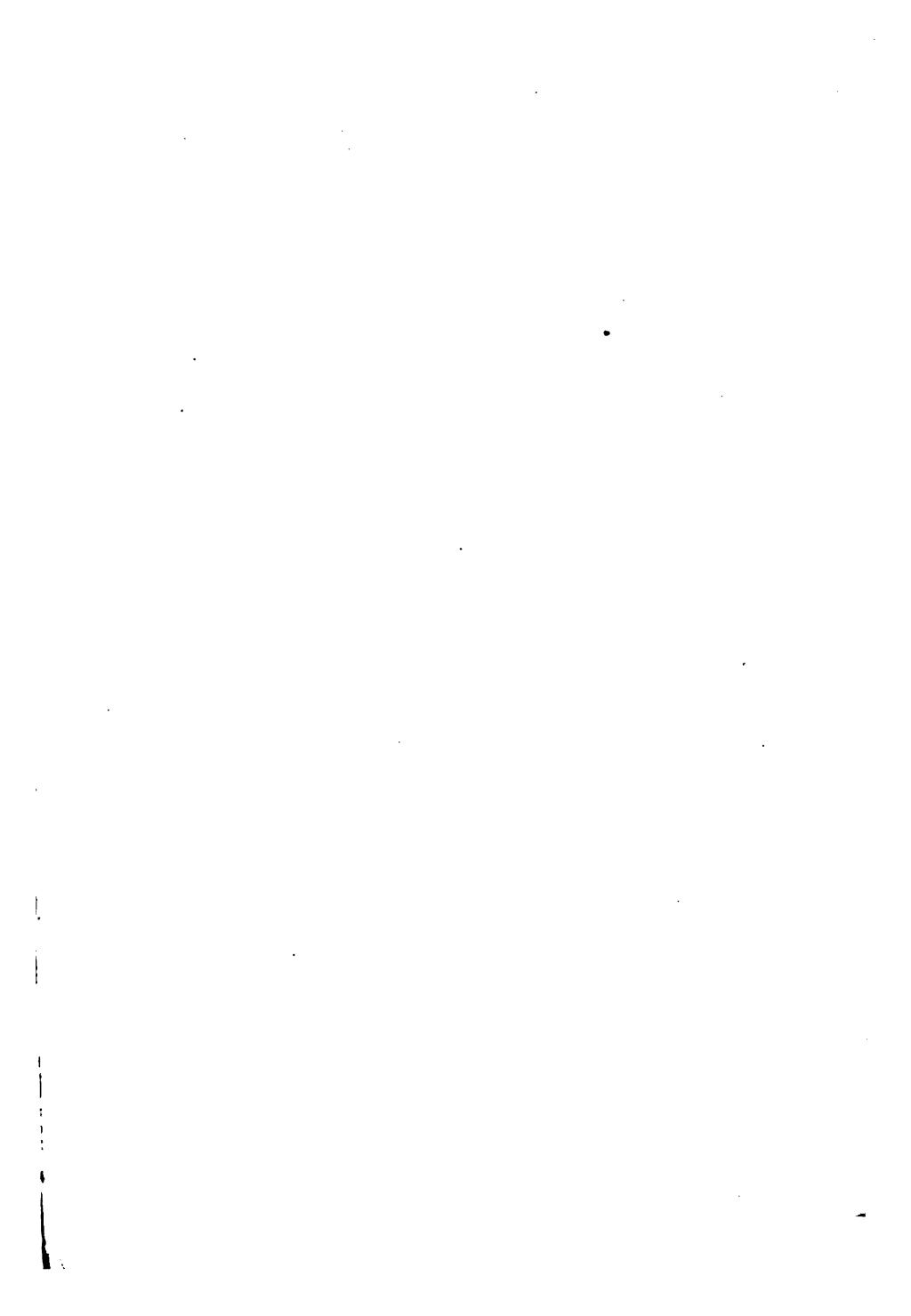
The weather took a turn for the better during the night, and it was fair afterward for a number of days, but during my stay at Chamonix there were always enough clouds drifting about so that the mountains

were never wholly unobscured. Mont Blanc was the most retiring of all. Wrapped in its misty dreams it never once deigned to reveal itself to the human mites in the valley watching vainly for a glimpse of its white majesty. I suppose the true way to see it is to climb to the very top of its everlasting snows. It is the only sure way, for the clouds love to hover about its frozen heights, and on an average only sixty days in the year is an unintercepted view of it to be had from the valley.

In spite of the toil and the dangers, about one hundred tourists go to the summit yearly, and among this number each season are two or three women. This climbing Mont Blanc is a comparatively modern pleasure. Up to one hundred and fifty years ago the valley of Chamonix was almost unknown. The region under the name of "The Accursed Mountains" was considered a wilderness, and the reputation of the inhabitants was decidedly bad. Then attention began to be attracted to its wonderful scenery, and in 1760 the scientist Sassure offered a prize for the discovery of a practical route to the summit of Mont Blanc. It was twenty-six years later that the ascent was successfully made and the prize won by Jacques Balmat, a guide. Balmat was then a young man, and he made the trip alone. In after years he went up again and again, and he was climbing among the mountain steeps

when at the age of seventy-two he met his death. He had in some way become possessed with the idea that there was gold in the high peaks and crags, and while engaged in one of his solitary quests for this wealth which had no existence save in his own imagination, he slipped over a precipice and was killed.

From Balmat's time on, ascents were not infrequent, but only in the last half century have they been a popular recreation. Now parties are going up in summer nearly every day. When a single tourist makes the ascent he is accompanied by at least one guide and a porter. The party is linked together by ropes, a guide ahead and a porter bringing up the rear. It is a three day's trip. The first day the climb is much of the way through the woods and among the rocks. At the point where the path is finally compelled to betake itself to the ice and the snow-fields there is a hut. Three hours farther on is a second hut on a splintered rib of the mountain granite which rises out of the frozen depths. These two cots are the summer home of a man and his wife who stay sometimes in one, sometimes in the other, to care for the parties of climbers. Supplies can be brought up to the first cabin on muleback, but to the farther one must be carried on human shoulders. From this the climb on the second day is continued to the summit. There, too, a shelter has been built, but it has no landlord





LABORERS IN THE CHAMONIX VALLEY

or regular occupant. The third day suffices for the return to the villages and green farm-lands of the Chamonix valley.

The ascent makes an interesting experience, and there is no doubt a peculiar charm in the remembrance of its hardships and its wild scenery. But there is no climax of a beautiful view from the summit. You are then nearly sixteen thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean, on the boundary line between France and Italy, with the borders of Switzerland only a few miles away. Yet Mont Blanc is so girt about with broad ice-fields and so removed from the world beyond that even in the clearest weather the distance presents only vague outlines.

About fifty fatalities have occurred in climbing this giant mountain of the Alps. The one recalled oftenest at the time of my visit was that of an English Captain Arkwright, who many years before had been swept to his death with three guides by an avalanche. After some days of digging the bodies of the three guides were recovered; but bad weather came on, and the search for Captain Arkwright was abandoned. In 1897, however, his body was found halfway down the mountain side in the glacial ice. It was perfectly preserved, but much mutilated, for the ice is in a way fluid and as it courses down the slopes its parts do not move together, and they rend everything they hold in their grip.

I had my fill of climbing in conveying myself up to the Mer de Glace, and I was quite content afterward to leave Mont Blanc to others while I wandered about the farm-lands of the valley. In the main the inhabitants are peasants depending for a living on their cattle and on what they can get from the soil. Even Cham-onix village has its rustic side, though at first it appears to be wholly composed of big hotels and souvenir shops, with streets enlivened in fair weather almost altogether by coaches and carriages, and by a mixed concourse of tourists, guides, and saddled mules. But seek out the byways and visit the outskirts, and you find many humble homes where live the plain farm folk. You see them driving their cattle to and from pasture, you catch glimpses of them through open doors doing their primitive housework, and you see them at their various field tasks. Always they labor in the presence of those vast mountain heights with their frowning forests and crags, their snowbound summits of dazzling purity, and their glaciers down-flowing in the gorges.

You would fancy that all this grandeur might have some marked effect on character, yet I suppose the valley folk get used to it and its power and majesty are wasted on them. But to the traveller it is fascinating and awe-inspiring, and once seen is never forgotten.

My only regret when I came away was that Mont Blanc had continued hidden. Toward the close of the day I left, the half-clouded sky showed a more marked tendency to clear than it had exhibited any time previous, and that evening at Geneva I sat long on the quays by the lake watching for the far-off Alps to appear. The clouds had been gradually melting away, and now none remained except for some low layers lingering along the southern horizon. But there lay the Alps, and though I imagined once or twice that I saw the snowy peaks pink in the last rays of the departing sun, I am afraid I was mistaken, and that Mont Blanc for me still belongs to the unknown.



XI

THE RHONE AND THE SOUTH



FOR its length the Rhone is probably the most rapid river in the world. Until near the very end its roily haste is unceasing. From Lyons, southward, it is easily navigable for good-sized vessels, but the current is so swift that the voyage upstream is attended with considerable difficulty and is at times well-nigh impracticable.

The river rises in the Swiss Alps and enters Lake Geneva stained with glacier mud. But in passing through the tranquil fifty miles of the lake all sediment sinks to the bottom, and at the lower end the water is celebrated for its clearness and for its wonderful tinge of blue. When I looked down into it from the Geneva wharves it seemed like fine

glass without a flaw, and everything at the bottom was perfectly distinct. The Rhone leaves the lake as pure and pellucid as crystal, but it so continues for only about a mile. Then the Arve joins it, bringing the glacier washings from the valley of Chamonix. It is an interesting sight to see the streams come together, one turbid and gray, the other blue as the sky. For a long distance they struggle together, boiling and whirling, the line of demarkation swaying this way and that, and continuing for some time quite distinct; but in the end the stain of the Alpine rocks penetrates the water from shore to shore, and the stream never loses that hue of muddy gray until it reaches the Mediterranean.

Below Avignon the river passes through a broad arid tract, and the banks are low and swampy; but the scenery of the upper and middle courses is varied and interesting, and, with its luxuriant southern vegetation, is often exceptionally beautiful. At least, that was the impression it made on me when I journeyed down the Rhone valley by train from Lyons one Sunday morning. Much of the way we were moving between high, steep hillsides which now and then were crowned with ruined castles, the old-time homes of the robber barons of the middle ages. Where the slopes descended too sharply to hold cultivated soil they were buttressed all over with stone walls and converted into a succes-

sion of narrow terraces. On all the hillsides, whether terraced or not, were grape-vines, green and spreading in the heat of early summer.

The peasantry of the upper valley of the Rhone had only recently begun their haying, but as we proceeded southward we gradually entered a region where the season and the farm work were much more advanced. The wheat changed color, passing from fresh green in the north through all stages of yellowing and ripening till there began to be fields cut, and frequent groups of harvesters were reaping others. In spite of its being Sunday I could not see but that just as much work was going forward as if it had been a week day. Small fields were the rule, and the harvesting was nearly always done by hand. The women did much of the raking into bundles and the binding, and, in several instances, I noticed women gleaning—going through the stubble and picking up stray ears, one or two at a time.

Toward noon I reached Avignon, an old town with a mediæval wall girding it round about. At frequent intervals in the wall are towers, each designed to be a little fortress of defence against invaders, but now long vacant and unused. The streets are crooked and narrow, and many of them are paved with rounded cobblestones that are far from adding to the comfort of the pedestrian. In the midst of the town, on a

hill overlooking the Rhone, is a great gray building that has the appearance of a castle, but which in reality is a one-time palace of the popes. For about seventy-five years in the fourteenth century, at a period when Rome was an undesirable dwelling-place by reason of Italian civil wars, the popes made Avignon their imperial city. Of late the old palace has been an army barracks, and soldiers in martial red and blue are always to be seen in the vicinity.

The streets and public squares, as I rambled through them that Sunday midday, were full of people, and the cafés were noisy with conviviality. In the chief square, before the town's most swell restaurant, a concert was in progress in which several women violinists took a prominent part. All such resorts had little tables set out in front of them on the walks, and, sometimes, these with their occupants encroached so far that passers had to take to the street. Sidewalk lunching was not a local peculiarity. It is found in French towns and villages everywhere, and the men especially seem to take pleasure in being on the public thoroughfares, seated in the shadow of the café building or of its awning, there to see the world go by and give the world the pleasure of seeing them as they leisurely sip their wines and smoke their cigars and cigarettes.

I soon had enough of the confusion and noise of the town, and went outside the walls for a walk

along the river; but the change was not altogether a success, for the sun glared painfully on the white roadways, and a gusty wind was blowing that showed remarkable facility in lifting off my straw hat and spinning it along the ground. The river repelled rather than attracted. It had neither the charm of a clear mountain torrent with foaming falls and dusky pools, nor of a lowland stream with reaches of quiet and repose. Here, as in nearly all its course, it was muddy and hurried, like a river in flood, and you felt that in this rush of dark water seaward there was something sinister and fateful. You would not think its grimy current could be congenial to life of the finny kind, yet all along the town borders men were fishing. Possibly they may have been impelled simply by a sportsman's instinct that must be gratified, independent of results—for I did not see them catch anything. There were also women by the waterside engaged in washing clothes. I do not see how they could expect to get them clean in such water, but all over France the women have a mania for doing their washing in the streams and ponds, and the quality of the water, whether it be clear, muddy, or stagnant, seems to be of no consequence.

My stay in Avignon was short, nor did I pause long anywhere in the southeast. The impression I got of the country was not such as to make me wish

to linger. The low hills appeared parched and tropical, the towns sunburned and bare. Olive orchards were frequent, but their gray-green foliage looked dusty and suggestive of prolonged heat, while the trees themselves were curiously twisted, and were seemingly stunted and very old. The landscape's only touch of coolness was in the emerald verdure of the vineyards, which in most regions abounded.

The weather, truly, was very hot, and the low, oven-like railway carriages were stifling; and they were the less bearable because my companions were almost certain to relieve the tedium of the journey by smoking. A Frenchman travelling by rail is never long content unless he has a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth. He is not at all bashful about it, but smokes as freely in non-smoking apartments as in any others. Nor did I ever notice that the presence of ladies made any difference. The smokers take it for granted that the aroma of the nicotine is to the feminine liking, and the Frenchman's proverbial politeness never impels him to inquire whether or not his cigarette is offensive. In one instance a young man who was riding in my apartment, accompanied by two young women, shared his cigarettes with his companions.

They were an intelligent and fairly well-looking trio, constantly engaged in lively and demonstrative chatter. The gentleman divided his attentions impartially be-

tween the two ladies and showed his appreciation of their charms by the occasional bestowal of caresses and kisses. But the climax was the offer of cigarettes. Each of the three took one, the man scratched a match and started his, and then offered the burning end to his fair companions, who from that lighted theirs. The women puffed as expertly as the man, and they exhaled the smoke and poked the ashes off with their little fingers in a manner that seemed to me quite scientific.

That, I suppose, was fast life. For an example of what would be popularly esteemed a more vulgar use of tobacco on the part of my fellow-travellers I might cite an old man and old woman who got on the train together at Avignon. The old woman was the possessor of a snuff-box which she pulled out every little while and passed to the man. He took a pinch and she took a pinch, and then they coughed and blew their noses in unison as if the effect was more irritable than grateful; but that could hardly have been the case or they would not have resorted to the snuff-box so frequently.

The strangest of all the companions I had on my southern trip were two monks—great, stout, full-bearded fellows who looked as if manual labor and hearty living were more in their line than religious contemplation, solitude, and self-denial. They wore black skull-caps, brown gowns corded about the waist,

and had sandals on their stockingless feet. Each carried a Bible and a long string of wooden prayer-beads. They were as unlike the life of the world to-day as if they had stepped out of some dim and ancient past after a magic sleep of centuries. I watched them with a kind of fascination as they sat in opposite corners at the other end of my apartment. They opened their Bibles and dropped off into a drowsy quiet, reading a little now and then, and telling over their beads with moving lips. I wondered if the rumble and clatter of the train speeding along over the iron rails was not disturbing to their fossilized and mossy meditations.

One of the sights that I had from the car window seemed part and parcel of the same ancient life represented by these monks. It was a glimpse of old Carcassonne. The railway passes through the new town of like name, but the old town was in full view on a slope opposite, as perfect in its mediævalism as if it had been purposely preserved for us. There was its citadel, and there was its double line of fortifications including no less than fifty round towers—and the whole scarcely altered since the days when battles were fought by main strength without the aid of gunpowder. Probably no other town in the world gives so true an impression of what the walled villages of the middle ages were like.

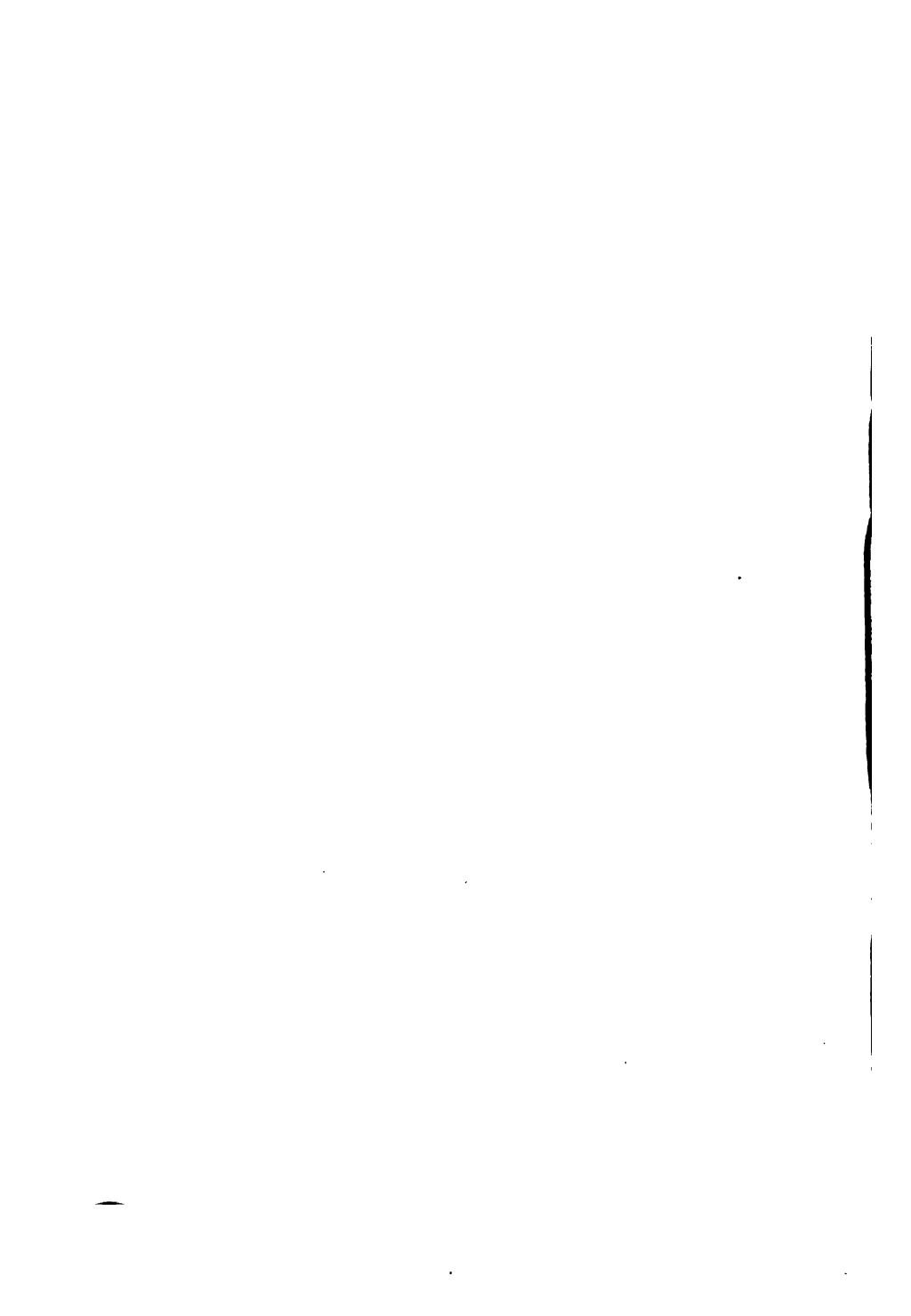
Another curious memory of the south has to do with the coast town of Cette where I broke my journey and staid over night. I had the greatest trouble in getting to sleep after I retired, for my room seemed to be full of mosquitoes. The creatures had musical wings that played the old familiar airs I had heard too many times in America to be mistaken about them, only these European mosquitoes did not bite. That was the mystery! If I once got used to them I do not think they would be particularly troublesome, but habit was too strong, and when they buzzed into my vicinity I could not help slapping at them. Half the night was gone before slumber put an end to the warfare.

At Cette and other points along the coast I had a chance to see the Mediterranean, and I thought its limpid and beautiful blue waters merited all the good things said of them. But the southern sky did not impress me as being specially different from any other skies; and at sunset the west was painted with the same tints I knew at home in New England.

I kept on westward after leaving Cette and stopped next at Toulouse, where I saw something of the country around the city and of the peasantry working in the fields — men and women hoeing onions, harvesting grain, etc., but the only thing new and different from what I had seen before was the well-sweeps that were



A VINEYARD



common all through the town outskirts. Every yard had one, and their poles were sticking up whichever way I looked.

When I resumed my journey, a few hours' travelling took me out of the parched lands of the southeast into a region really beautiful. The landscape began to heave into hills, and as I proceeded the hills grew constantly larger. They were pleasantly wooded, too, and among the other trees on the slopes were many sturdy chestnuts crowded with tasselled bloom. At length the noble range of the Pyrenees came into view, its lofty blue heights rising ridge on ridge till the summits of those in the haziest distance were crested with snow; and there, on the border-lands of Spain, my journey, so far as it has to do with the more characteristic phases of the south, was at an end.



XII

A TOWN OF MODERN MIRACLES



ON one side of a narrow valley among the foothills of the Pyrenees in southern France, rises a great ragged precipice. It faces to the north, and the sunshine never warms it, and its shadow serves to deepen the natural gloom of a narrow cavern that reaches back into the base of the cliff. Fifty years ago the herders from the town of Lourdes, not far distant, fed their pigs here on the banks of the swift mountain river Gave, which hurries noisily through the ravine; and when a sudden shower caught the herders unawares they drove the swine to the cave, and crouched in its shelter to wait till the rain passed.

The aspect of the place has altered since then. It would be sacrilege now to put the cavern to such

plebeian uses ; for in 1858 a little shepherdess, Bernadette Soubirous, had a series of visions at this spot the fame of which has served to make Lourdes one of the most notable places of pilgrimage in the world.

The town is old, and in feudal days its situation gave it considerable importance. Its castle, perched then as now on a lofty and almost inaccessible rock where seven valleys meet, was the key to all the mountain district lying to the south, and Lourdes was the scene of many a fierce combat and long siege in the old wars with the English. But changes in methods of warfare and, especially, the advent of railroads made the town and the ancient castle no longer of consequence. The currents of life flowed in other channels, and this region of big hills and rude mountain ridges became one of quiet and stagnation.

When Bernadette was born in 1844, Lourdes was apparently destined to an existence of unending commonplace. The inhabitants were pious, law-abiding, and contented, but at the same time were ignorant and unenterprising. Most of Bernadette's childhood was spent a few miles from Lourdes, at Bartres in the home of a foster-mother. Bartres was a little village of four hundred inhabitants, very secluded and far from any frequented highway. Its few houses and small church reposed in a green hollow with wooded slopes about and a clear rivulet went always singing through the

lowlands. The house of Bernadette's foster-parents stood solitary at the end of the village. It was like that of any ordinary peasant, low and damp, with floors of flagstone and a roof of thatch.

As soon as Bernadette was large enough she was put to tending sheep, and season after season she spent her days watching her flock on the lonely hillsides. She was very thin and always suffering from a nervous asthma which stifled her in bad weather. At the age of eleven she could neither read nor write and was infantile and backward. She had great trouble in learning her rosary, but, once acquired, she repeated it all day long as she followed her grazing sheep. Her foster-mother had a brother who was a priest. He occasionally visited the family, and in the winter evenings, by the blaze of the home fire, he sometimes read marvellous stories to the household — stories of saints, angels, and heroes, of prodigious adventures, and of all kinds of strange and supernatural events. The books from which the priest read had pictures in them, and at these Bernadette was fond of looking. They were mostly of a religious nature — God enthroned in all his glory, scenes from the life of Christ, and representations of the Virgin Mary. But the book read most of all in that Bartres home was the Bible. Bernadette's foster-father, the only member of the household who knew how to read, had an old copy that had been in

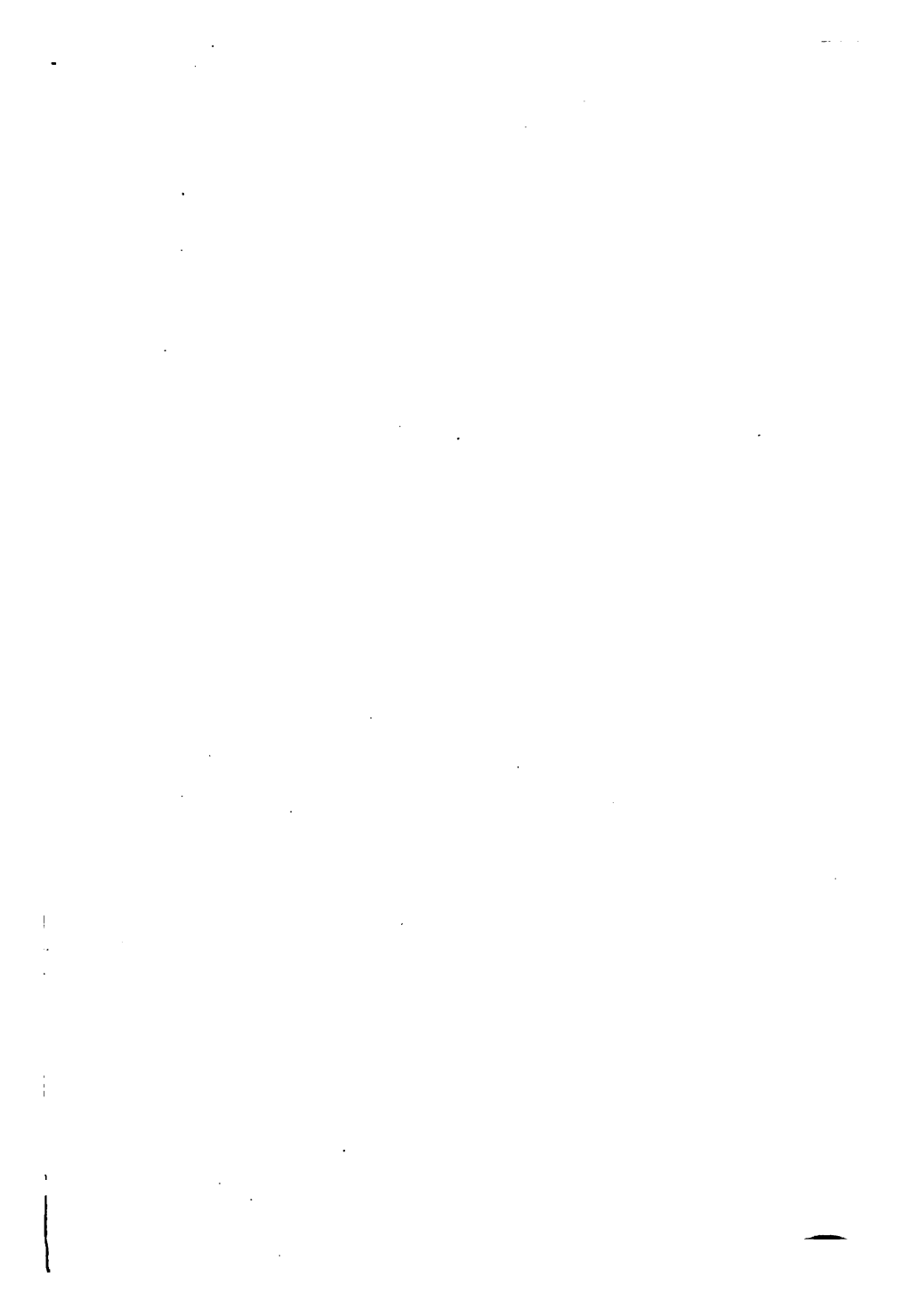
the family over one hundred years, and it was yellow and grimy with time and use. Every evening he would take a pin, pass it at random between the leaves, open the book where the pin had chanced to enter and begin reading at the top of the right-hand page.

The inhabitants of the region were all simple-minded and superstitious, and Bernadette was like the rest. The whole countryside was peopled with mysteries — with trees which sang, stones from which blood flowed, and crossroads where if you failed to pray promptly a seven-horned beast was likely to appear and carry you off to perdition. Bernadette's especial terror was a certain tower of the vicinity which she never would pass after sundown because it was said to be haunted by the fiend.

When Bernadette was fourteen she began to plan for her first communion, and applied herself to learning her catechism at the church. She never had received any schooling, and her progress was so slow that her parents were displeased, and took her home with them that she might continue her studies with more diligence. The Soubirous family were very poor and lived in one of the humblest and narrowest streets of the town. They had a single room on the ground floor at the end of a dark passage, and here dwelt father, mother, and five children. In that wretched, gloomy room they did their housework, ate, and slept.

Bernadette had been in Lourdes only two or three weeks when one chilly February morning the mother told her to go down to the borders of the Gave and pick up some wood, that she might have fuel with which to cook the dinner. A younger sister and a girl from one of the neighbor's accompanied Bernadette, and the three together, hugging their ragged wraps about them to keep out the cold, went down to the stream. They had been there after wood too often to find it plentiful, but they gradually filled their arms with fragments until, following along the banks, they came to the great rocks a half mile from the village, rising sombrely almost from the verge of the stream.

It was now noon, and the Angelus rang from the parish church. At its sound, Bernadette, who had lagged behind the other girls, felt a great agitation within her, and her ears were filled with such a tempestuous roar that she fancied a hurricane had descended from the mountains and was about to overwhelm her. But the trees were motionless and the air quiet. Then she glanced toward the rocks and was half blinded by a great light which gathered against the side of the cliff where an aperture like a rude oval window sank into the crag just above the gloomy mouth of a cavern running back a rod or two under the base of the precipice. Bernadette fell on her knees





LOURDES CASTLE

in her fright, but kept her eyes fixed on the niche above the cavern. Little by little in the light she discerned a white form, and she trembled lest this figure should be the devil. To protect herself against the possible evil nature of the apparition she began to tell her beads, and then the light slowly faded, and she hastened to join her companions.

To her surprise they had observed nothing unusual, and when her interrogations aroused their curiosity, and they began in turn to question her, she was confused and troubled, and did not reply. But as they walked back to the village with their arms full of broken sticks, the questioning continued, and at length she said she had seen something white. That was interesting, and her companions on reaching home repeated the tale to their intimates, and it soon ran through the neighborhood. Bernadette's father and mother were much displeased with this childish nonsense, as they called it, and told her to keep away from the rocks by the Gave in future.

However, the curiosity of the townfolk was such that, come Sunday, nothing would do but the girl must go to the spot again, armed with a bottle of holy water, to ascertain whether or not it was the devil she had to deal with. Just as before, she saw the dazzling light, and in the light the figure, which this time became more clearly defined, smiled on her, and showed

no fear of the holy water. As soon as the figure vanished, the townspeople crowded around Bernadette, eager to learn what it was she had seen. At first she replied hesitatingly and vaguely, but when she was pressed she said the figure was that of a lady, and she wore a long veil which covered her head and fell to her feet. Her robe was of the purest white, her sash blue like the sky, and on each of her bare feet bloomed a golden rose.

The following Thursday Bernadette went for the third time to the riverside, and on this occasion the radiant figure requested that she should come there every noon for fifteen days. Friday and Saturday the Lady bowed and smiled but did not speak. On Sunday, however, she wept and said to Bernadette, "Pray for sinners."

Monday she failed to appear, but Tuesday she again shone forth from the dark niche above the grotto, and confided to Bernadette a secret which concerned the girl alone, and which she was commanded never to divulge. On that day, too, the Lady said, "Go tell the priests they must build a chapel here."

Wednesday the Lady frequently murmured the word, "Penitence—penitence!" and the child repeated the word after her, kissing the earth.

Thursday the Lady said, "Go and drink and wash at the spring, and eat of the grass that is beside it."

This command Bernadette did not understand, for she knew of no spring near. But when she searched and went within the cavern, a cold fountain of water began to bubble forth from the rock at the touch of her hand.

The Lady for a second time failed to appear on Friday; but was shining in the usual place on the six days following. She repeated her commands, and Bernadette humbly listened and told her beads, and each time when the apparition vanished kissed the earth and on her knees sought the spring in the grotto, there to drink and wash. On the last of the six days the Lady requested more pressingly than before that a chapel might be built, and she promised that multitudes should resort to it from all nations. It was three weeks later that the apparition next shone from the cavity above the grotto. This time the Lady clasped her hands, turned her eyes toward heaven, and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Twice more she appeared, at somewhat long intervals, the final time being July 16, when she bade Bernadette farewell.

This series of apparitions, eighteen in all, caused intense excitement at Lourdes from the very beginning. Every one was curious to set eyes on the scene of the mystery, and at times many thousands were looking on while the little shepherdess, kneeling before

the dark precipice, saw that glorified figure. The multitude beheld only Bernadette's ecstasy. For them there was no light, no figure, no sound of voice. They turned their eyes toward the shadowed crag, and as far as they could discern, it was the same it always had been; and then they looked at the rapt countenance of the girl, and they could not agree whether her vision was a reality or not. Some believed and some doubted. All sorts of stories were in circulation. It was remembered that a shepherd had spoken of that very cliff and prophesied that great things would take place there. On the other hand, an old woman of Lourdes said she had seen a toad's foot in Bernadette's eye, and that she was simply a witch.

When the miraculous spring appeared in the cavern, many drank of the water, and certain ones who had been grievously sick announced themselves cured through its agency. From that time forth the common people had no question but that the Blessed Virgin, in compassion for suffering humanity, had come to earth there at Lourdes and given the vicinity of the grotto, with its spring, supernatural powers to heal. Bernadette had an almost wholly sympathetic audience in her later visions. To the assembled onlookers she was a saint, and they kissed her garments. When she knelt before the grotto with a lighted taper in her right hand and her rosary in her

left the crowd broke into sobs, and a frenzy of lamentation and prayer arose.

At first it was the populace only who accepted the truth of Bernadette's visions. The clergy held aloof for months, while the civil authorities made every effort to put down the excitement by force. To the officials Bernadette was either a liar or a lunatic, and they threatened her with imprisonment. The commissary of police had her before him as soon as the story of her early visions began to attract general attention, and he did his best to catch her tripping, but her story never varied. Afterward she had to appear before the judges of a local tribunal, who endeavored in vain to wring a retraction from the child. Finally two doctors examined her and pronounced her case one of nervous trouble and diseased imagination. On the strength of this the authorities would have sent her to a hospital, but they feared the public exasperation.

Things grew worse instead of better, and at last the prefect had the approaches to the grotto occupied by the militia. The cave had been decorated with vases of flowers; money and various trinkets had been thrown into it; and some quarrymen, inspired by the contagious religious enthusiasm, had, without remuneration, cut a reservoir to receive the miraculous water, and had cleared a path under the hillside.

The prefect felt the time had come to take decided action and root out the whole superstition. He would remove the offerings from the grotto and build a palisade across the front to keep the deluded mobs away. It took him half a day to find any one willing to let him have a cart on which to carry off the accumulation of offerings. Two hours later the person of whom he hired the cart fell from a loft and was seriously injured, while the next day a man who lent him an ax had one of his feet crushed by the fall of a block of stone. The Lord was plainly on the side of the people, but for some reason or other the commissary escaped unscathed. Amid jeers and hisses he took away the pots of flowers, the tapers that were burning, and the bits of money and the silver hearts which lay on the sand.

Then the palisades were put up. But the people, hungering for healing, found ways to pass the guards and to get over or through the palings, and the prohibition of the authorities only aroused anger and spread the fame of the place wider. The names of trespassers were taken, and soon a woful procession of the lame and sick came before the justice of the peace to answer for their defiance of the law. It seemed to them that the officials had no pity for human wretchedness. One day, a whole band of poverty-stricken and ailing folk went to the mayor,

knelt in his courtyard, and implored him with sobs to allow the grotto to be reopened. A mother held out toward him her child, barely alive — would he let the little one die in her arms when there was a spring so near, which had saved the children of other mothers? A blind man called attention to his eyes, and there were others who showed unsightly sores, maimed arms, crippled legs. But the mayor was unable to promise anything, and the crowd withdrew, weeping and rebellious.

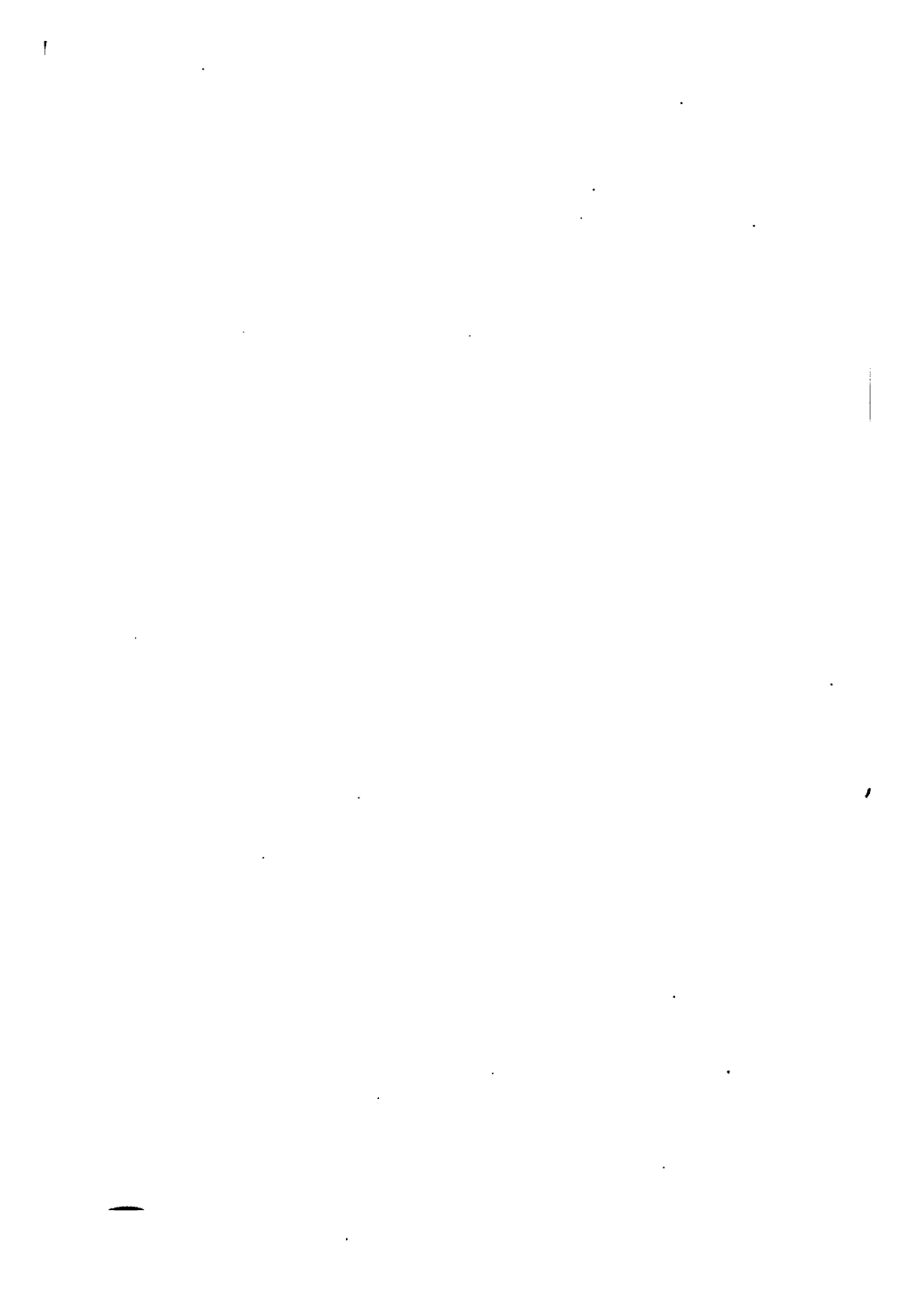
The struggle went on for nearly half a year, and the people grew more and more restive. It was rumored that whole villages intended to come down from the hills and “deliver God,” as they termed it. The parish priest, at the time of the visions, did not hesitate to express his scepticism of their genuineness, and he and the rest of the clergy of the region ignored, as long as they could, the whole affair; but in the end they succumbed to the popular will, and gave their sanction to the truth of all that the people believed. Then the civil authorities retracted, the palisades were removed, and everybody was allowed free access to the grotto. Immediately afterward the surrounding land was purchased by the bishop of the district, and the Church began its work at Lourdes. As miracles multiplied, and money flowed in more and more from all parts of Christendom, the scope

of the work enlarged, until to-day the property at Lourdes is strikingly imposing and immensely profitable.

On ordinary occasions, I think the first thing the visitor to Lourdes remarks is the vast concourse of hotel omnibuses in waiting at the station. A tenth of the number would have sufficed for all the business there was doing the day of my arrival, but if I had come at the time of one of the great pilgrimages, every vehicle would have had its load, and even then the crowd would not have begun to be accommodated. The scenery amid which the town is placed is wild and impressive. Everywhere are big hills that roll and tumble, and sometimes lift into stony mountain heights, while in the far south can be seen the white-peaked Pyrenees, marking the dividing line between France and Spain. On a rugged steep, rising out of the midst of the Lourdes valley, sits the old castle, looking down from its rocky eyry with a fine sense of watchfulness and impregnability. In the depths below is the river Gave, always foaming and hurrying along its tortuous course, and beside the stream, at its more accessible points, you are sure to see groups of women busy with their washing. They prefer the early morning hours for the work, but even in the heat of midday some of them are still there, scrubbing away on their knees at the edge of the torrent. When



ONE OF THE TOWN'S-WOMEN



a woman finishes her task, she packs up the wet clothes in a basket which she carries off home poised on her head. That seemed to be the common method of carrying heavy burdens in Lourdes.

Close under the castle crag stands the gray old parish church on the borders of the market-place, whence the crooked, narrow ways of the old town go straggling off in all directions. The life of the old town appeared sleepy and ancient. Homes were humble, methods of work antiquated, and heavy outdoor tasks fell to the lot of the women to a degree unusual even for France. I noticed, for instance, two of the women following after a heavy municipal garbage cart and shovelling into it the heaps of street refuse.

Immediately outside the old town to the east is open farming country. When I went for a walk in that direction one morning, I found the peasantry busy cutting the grass with their broad-bladed scythes and spreading that which had lain in swaths or tumbles since the day before. Others were working in the fields of Indian corn. Corn-fields were common in many sections of the south of France, and they had such an American flavor that they made me homesick. But there was nothing American about the farm folk who labored in them. Here at Lourdes the men looked like Spaniards, and the sunburned women with colored kerchiefs over their heads might have been

Italians. In cultivating between the rows of corn a plough was used that was about as aboriginal an instrument as could be devised. A pointed spade took the place of a ploughshare, and this was attached to the lesser branch of a crotched stick, while the longer branch served as a neap. The plough was usually drawn by a yolk of little cows, and it was a very common custom in that part of the country to make cows do all the work that generally falls to the lot of oxen. I suppose the farmers think it economical to have workers and milkers combined in one animal, but it must tell on the milk both in quantity and quality. Except for the labor exacted of them the cows seemed to be treated with consideration, and they had light blankets on their backs and fringes of string were draped across their faces to keep the flies from their eyes. Sometimes when attached to carts in the hay-fields the cows were further protected from insect pests and from the glare of the sun by a forkful of hay placed on their heads.

An interesting peculiarity of the roadside houses was the custom of building the barns with one gable open. There was then no occasion to drive inside with loads of hay or grain. Everything could be pitched in from without; and if the building was judiciously placed so that the opening faced away from the prevailing winds and storms the arrangement

was not a bad one, even if the barn did look half finished. I doubt, however, if an open gable would do in New England. Our prevailing winds come from too many different directions.

On all the roads around Lourdes are frequent tall wooden crosses, and you see other crosses on the adjacent mountain tops, but they are most numerous on a steep, rocky hill that rises just outside the town borders. This hill is known as a Calvary, and the path which climbs with short turns up its incline has a cross at every angle until you reach the summit, where there is one greater than any of the others, bearing a figure of Christ. From the Calvary the view commands all the region around. On a hill across the valley stands the castle, with old Lourdes lying at the foot of its guardian cliff. Lower and nearer, is new Lourdes, full of big hotels and lodging-houses, rows and rows of souvenir shops, and, a little more retiring, convents, hospitals, and other buildings of a religious nature. The souvenir shops are a curious feature of the town. There are great numbers of them existing side by side through whole streets, most of them only one story high and open to the sidewalk, so that the merchants can pounce on you with their urgent appeals to buy if you so much as glance at their wares. The pious knickknacks in which they deal are much the same in the different

shops — chaplets in skeins and in heaps and at all prices, Blessed Virgins great and small, in metal, wood, ivory, and plaster, scapularies, devotional pictures, medals, rings, brooches, and bracelets ornamented with stars and crosses and sacred figures, purses, paper-weights, even snuff-boxes and wooden pipes from which beam the figure of Our Lady of Lourdes. Unfortunately most of these things are either crude or ugly.

In front of the town of hotels and shops is a long esplanade or public park laid out beside the Gave, and at its far end are the three churches of Our Lady built by the contributions of the faithful.

The churches make an odd group, for they are not three distinct buildings, but are imposed one above another. The lowest is the Church of the Rosary, its form that of a heavy squat dome; the next is the Crypt cut in the solid rock; and finally, above all rises the Basilica with its slender and very lofty spire. No effort has been spared to make the buildings splendid without and within, especially the Basilica, which is most prominent. Its high, narrow interior is rich and full of color, and is particularly noticeable by reason of the immense numbers of banners and votive offerings that adorn the walls. They are everywhere — hung from the vaulted roof, against the pillars, and in the side chapels; there are banners of

silk, satin, and velvet, often beautifully embroidered, and there are jewels, crosses, bridal wreaths, and thousands of gold and silver hearts. All empires and kingdoms of the earth are represented.

From the Basilica colossal gradient ways, one on either side, reach down in the form of a horseshoe to the level of the esplanade. They make the Basilica look like some great creature of stone with long fore-legs extended and holding the lower church in their grasp. Under the cliff on which the upper church stands is the grotto. To reach it you pass beneath one of the arches of the gradient way, walk a short distance along a fine, tree-lined avenue skirting the Gave, and there it is before you — a low, wedge-shaped aperture no larger than a room in an ordinary dwelling-house. The rocks do not look at all extraordinary, masses of ivy trail down the face of the crag, the breezes come and go, and all the functions of nature seem to be pursuing the same course they would anywhere else. Yet, with its worshippers, and the spell of its strange history, and its adaptation by man to the uses of a holy shrine, the spot is very impressive.

What catches the eye first is the statue of the Virgin in a dark niche above the cavern, a white figure with a blue sash, and on her feet golden roses, exactly as the apparition has been described by Bernadette. Next you observe that under the roof of the cavern is hung

a vast array of crutches and body supports of all kinds; and the people to whom these belonged have come here cripples and gone away restored and sound. The whole space before the grotto is smoothly paved, and the river's bed has been pushed back from its old course so that there is room for the gathering of a great number of people.

A high iron fence has been put up across the front of the grotto, with an opening at one side for entrance, and one at the other side for exit. The interior contains a few chairs, a small altar, and an organ, and it has the look of a miniature underground chapel. Its most pronounced feature is its scores and scores of lighted candles. They are of all sizes up to monsters seven or eight inches through, and six feet high. Tapers of this caliber cost ten dollars or more and burn for a month; but there are candles to suit all purses, and you can get very little ones that will burn three hours for a penny. I believe such are not supposed to make so efficacious an appeal to Heaven as the ten-dollar ones, though much depends on the accompanying faith and fervency of the donator. The heat of the wavering flames keeps the tallow dripping, and the wind makes the grease trickling from the tops of the tapers cool in fantastic shreds. The grotto would overflow with tallow after a time if the drippings were not cleaned up and carted off. A man in

an apron had charge of this work, and he kept an old broom and an iron scraper handy just back of the entrance gate. He had not the air of sanctity one would expect in a person so closely associated with the shrine, and his manner as he went about his scraping and brushing showed as little concern in his surroundings as if he had been digging ditches. The candles burn continuously, day and night, all through the year. Even when the icy tempests of the dark winter nights are whitening the valley, and lashing the great trees by the stream side, the candles in the grotto flare and flicker just the same. The deep stain of soot on the cavern walls testifies to the numbers that are burned.

As I glanced about the grotto I observed that the wall in one place looked like polished black marble. This smooth, shining patch was just beneath the cavity where the Virgin appeared, and the secret of its polish was that there the pilgrims rub the chaplets and the medals they wish to consecrate, and there millions of lips have kissed the cold, grimy rock.

Another curious thing which one cannot help remarking is a recess in one corner of the cave half full of letters deposited in it or thrown through the grotto railing by devotees who have some request to make of the Lady of Lourdes. There is nothing for which they do not ask — health, prosperity, triumph in a

lawsuit, that a marriage may be effected or an enemy be brought to grief. Some are angry in tone and upbraid the Virgin for not granting the writer's prayers. The letters are opened by the priests, who take charge of any money they may contain and then leave them in the recess to get such answer as they may from the Blessed Virgin.

Nothing is to be seen of the miraculous spring. It is in the floor of the grotto covered with an iron door, and the water from it is conducted by pipes to faucets outside, and to the baths in a low line of buildings at the foot of the cliff near by. The flow is usually small, and a cistern has been made in which the water collects during the night. Otherwise the supply would sometimes fall short. After copious rainfalls the spring acts just as other springs would — increases in volume, and it occasionally bursts bounds and floods the grotto floor. The water is very cold, and I found it excellent to drink on a hot day, but it gave me the chills to think of bathing in it. Even the fathers of the grotto admit that to certain patients the sudden shock of cold is dangerous, and they either refuse the baths to such or warn them that they bathe at their own risk.

I saw no marvellous manifestation while I was at Lourdes, yet the scene before the grotto was always strangely interesting in spite of its uneventful quiet. The spot was away from all the noise of the town, and

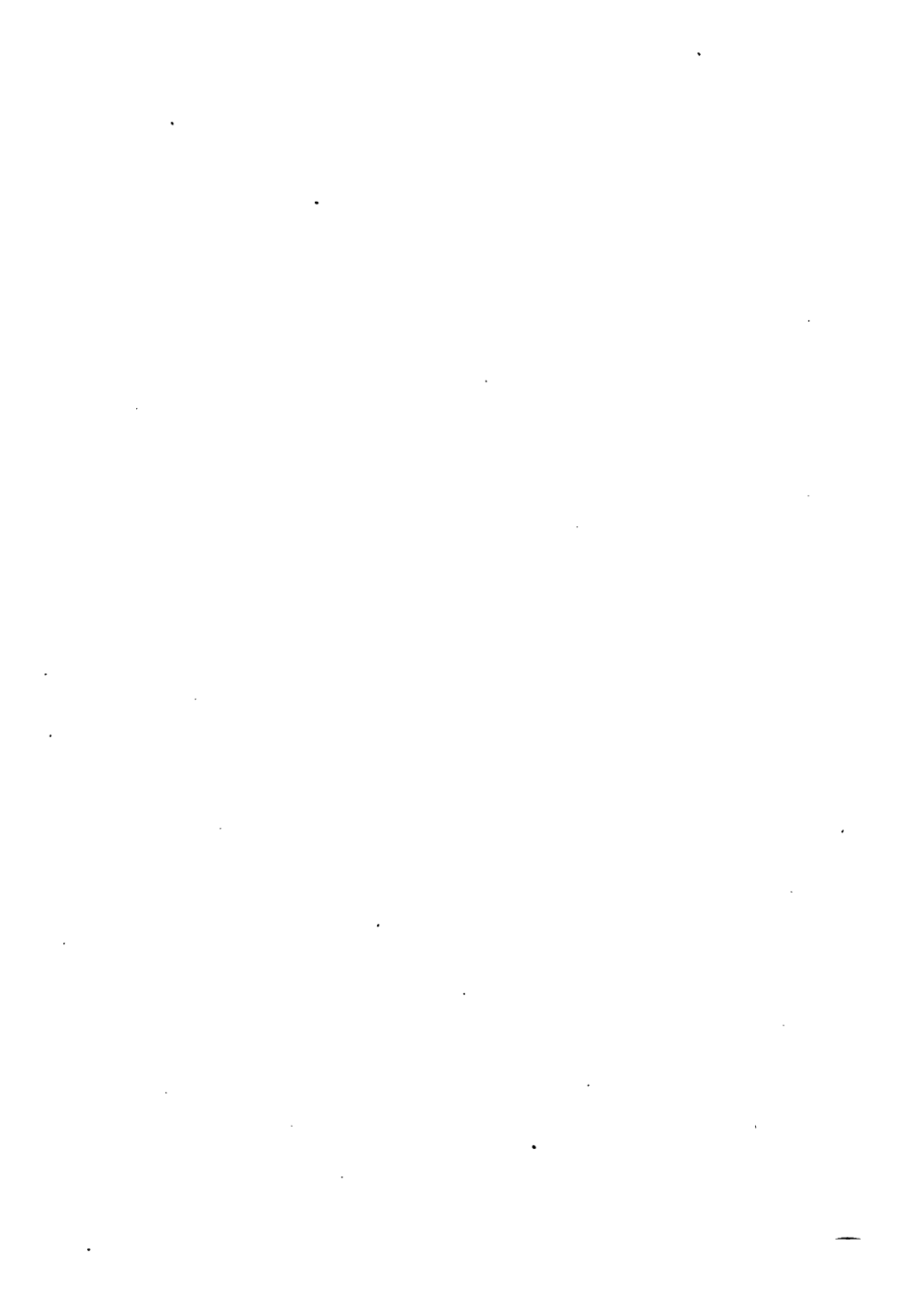
the people who gathered there were for the most part silent, reverential, and intensely in earnest. They drank of the water, many washed their hands, and some pulled up their sleeves and bathed their arms with the flow from this fount of life. Often they filled bottles or cans to carry home with them for their own further use or for the cure of relatives or friends.

Immediately in front of the grotto were several rows of settees, and this was the favorite gathering-place of devotees, though some liked better the dusk of the grotto interior, and others sat afar off on a continuous seat which was part of a stone parapet skirting the Gave. Among the most constant of the concourse before the cavern during my stay were a priest and his old mother, in whom I took a special interest because they had arrived at Lourdes on the train which brought me, travelling in the same apartment. The priest had a dreadful hacking cough, and it was for his welfare, not the old mother's, that they had come. He was a cold, hard-featured man, but he looked gritty, and was plainly determined to fight his ill health to the bitter end — and how the mother loved him! Every time the cough caught in his throat the tears came to the old woman's weak eyes, and she bowed forward and looked at the image of the Virgin standing in the niche of the dark crag before her in heartfelt supplication. So they sat, hour after hour, he in the black

robes of his order, she in the black garments of an old woman, thinking, hoping, praying.

Some of the worshippers fell on their knees to beseech the intervention of Heaven in behalf of themselves or their loved ones. Usually they knelt far up in front, sometimes grasping the bars of the fence, before the grotto, sometimes a little farther back, with arms extended and eyes on the mute marble figure in the rock above. Once in a while there were those who humbled themselves to a still greater degree, and bowed down and kissed the paving. The people were of all sorts, those ill in body and those ill in mind; and a portion of those who sought the Virgin's help had no troubles other than the feebleness of age.

Once while I sat looking on a young man of the bourgeois class, accompanied by his wife and little girl, approached the grotto. The mother with some difficulty induced the little one to courtesy to the statue of Our Lady, then left her in the care of the father while she went to kneel near the entrance of the grotto. The child toddled about for a few moments, and then in some way tripped and fell so that her head struck the paving with a good deal of violence. She broke into a loud wail of pain and fright, the mother jumped to her feet and ran to the spot, the father caught up the little girl in his arms, and every one in the audience was in a tremor of regret and sympathy. At once





A BARN WITH AN OPEN GABLE

humanity was full of compassion, and all hearts were stirred; but the white figure and the grotto with all their supernatural powers of healing were untouched and gave no sign. A great bump rose on the child's forehead, and the parents kissed her and tried to comfort her, and they let the water of the fountain flow on the hurt, and then they laid on wet handkerchiefs and went away.

The child's sobs grew faint in the distance, and quiet again brooded over the place. There stood the silent white figure in its niche, there was the dark grotto under the high, vine-draped cliff, the little flames were eating down into the tallow on the candle tops, the water tinkled from the brass faucets, the leaves rustled on the great trees, and wavering shadows contested with the burning sunshine on the stone paving. A human atom had been hurt, but there was no visible indication that it made a particle of difference to either deity or nature.

That marvellous cures are made at Lourdes is beyond question, but that these are due to the miraculous power of the place, and not primarily to some wholly natural mental or physical change in the persons cured, is not so clear. Every one to be treated in the baths comes provided with a certificate from a doctor, frequently from several doctors. If a cure takes place, the cured one goes to the verification office

not far from the baths, the certificate is examined, and the patient's past condition is compared with the present to see if the benefit is real. But was the patient's physician correct in his diagnosis, is the cure permanent, and is there any assurance that the Lourdes examiners are infallible or even disinterested?

Of the alleged cures I will only mention one that was related to me by a friend who personally knew about the circumstances. It is an American case—that of a Philadelphia boy who had never walked. One of his legs was shrivelled, and he was always wheeled about in a little cart. As he grew, the only change was to get a larger cart from time to time. His parents spent all their money seeing doctors and trying cures. Finally they lost hope. Then the boy's godmother suggested they should take him to Lourdes. The father scoffed at the idea. He did not believe in present-day miracles—it was all nonsense. See what the doctors had said. Besides, he had no money.

Then the godmother offered to pay all expenses. Nevertheless, nothing would have been done had not the boy himself become interested and begged to go. So they made the long journey. His was not a case of coming out of the bath wholly restored at once, but he began from the first to improve, and in a short time he could walk like other boys. The shrivelled leg did not become quite as large as the other, but it was

serviceable, and the miracle, if not perfect in its details, was sufficiently wonderful. To the sceptical the flaw in it lies in the fact that the boy was himself so eager to try the cure. He believed, and he made an effort to use his limbs such as he had never made before. However, whether the grotto has supernatural power or not, most of suffering humanity is always eager to grasp at possible restoration independent of logic or of science, and is ready to pursue a phantom if it is a last chance. Lourdes has waxed great and famous through this inherent tendency of human nature, and pilgrims will continue to flock to it until some new spot with power still more miraculous shall draw them elsewhere.

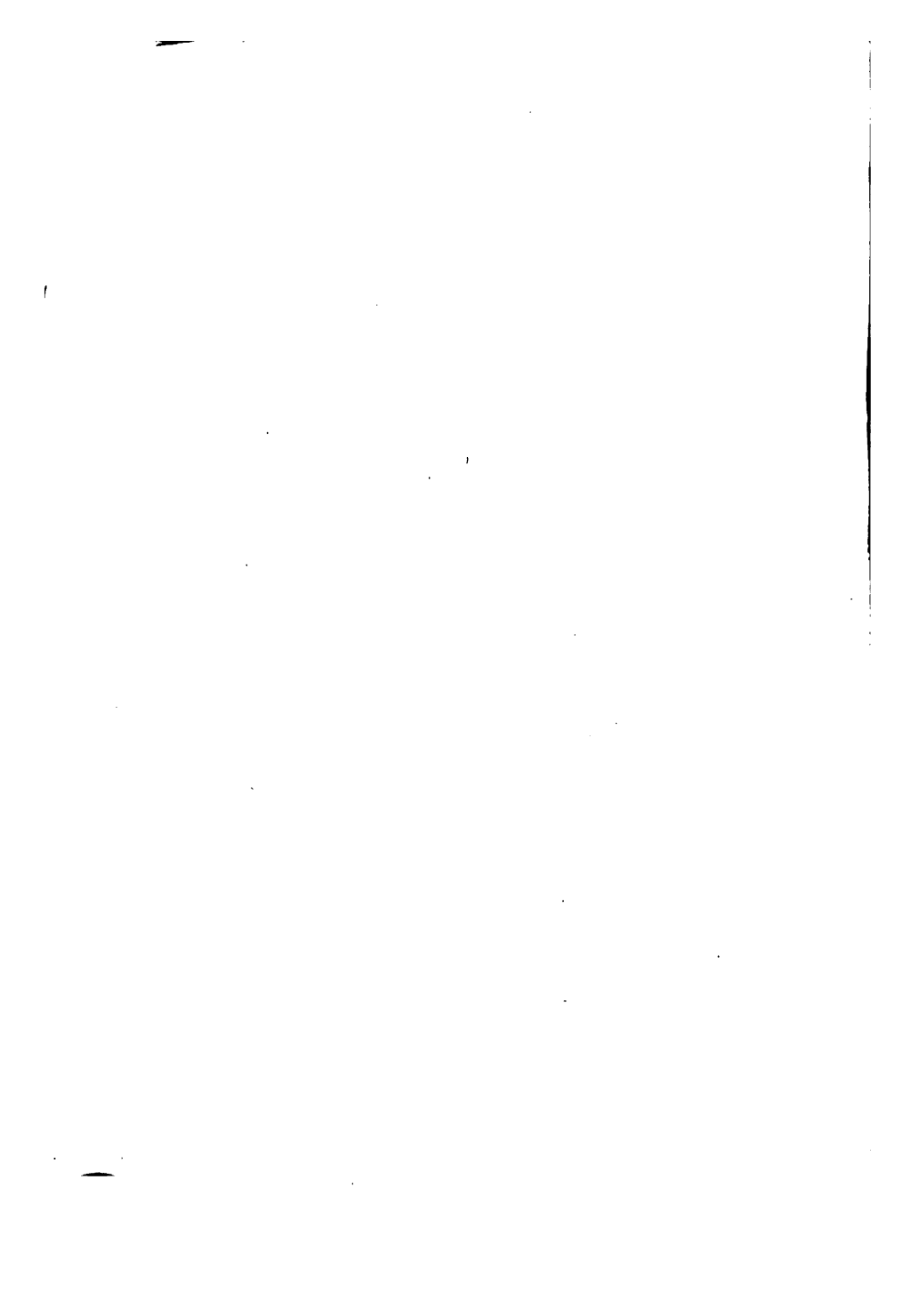
The most notable of the large pilgrimages that are coming to Lourdes throughout the summer, is the National Pilgrimage of France. It starts from all quarters of the republic, at a date in August appointed beforehand. From thirty to fifty thousand are transported yearly, and probably fully a thousand of these are ill past recovery. Several trains go from Paris alone, to make an uninterrupted journey of twenty-two hours. The sick are provided with pillows and mattresses, and friends and nuns are present to wait on them, but the trains are much crowded, and there is a good deal of discomfort. The pilgrimage arrives at Lourdes in great confusion, and confusion and

intense excitement are rife all through the half week's stay. There are gatherings by day and by night; new cures incite to fresh ardor; prayers unnumbered ascend; the suppliants drink the water, bathe, burn tapers, and then they go home—a few benefited, but the many disappointed.

From two hundred to five hundred thousand pilgrims visit Lourdes every year—and what became of the little shepherdess whose visions are the source of all this coming and going? Soon after the time of the apparitions she left her home to become the charge of the Sisters of Nevers, who had a convent in Lourdes, and who cared for the poor in the town asylum. The convent afforded some protection, though not a very effective one, from public inquisitiveness, and there Bernadette made her first communion, and was with difficulty taught to read and write. She continued to suffer with asthma, and, as the miraculous water of the grotto failed to be of any benefit in her case, she was taken to some baths in the mountains, but she returned unrelieved. She helped in sundry petty duties, and always had a piece of needlework, knitting, or embroidery in hand when her ill health was not such as to keep her in bed, as it often did for weeks at a time. She had fine eyes, clear and child-like, but her other features were very ordinary—puny, unobtrusive, and dull. She never had intimate friends



THE GROTTTO



or companions, and seemed attracted most by children. With the little ones at the asylum where the sisters ministered, she was happy and even quietly gay; and the children returned her affection, and liked to embrace her, and to have her look on while they played. Her piety continued keen, yet was neither ecstatic nor in any way overwrought. She had no more visions, and never of her own accord spoke of those eighteen apparitions of her childhood. When questioned about them she answered briefly, and then sought to change the conversation. The crowds that flocked to see and pay reverence to Bernadette were a source of annoyance and fatigue. Often she grew faint with repeating her story. No day passed without its stream of visitors. Ladies of high rank fell on their knees before her, kissed her gown, and would have liked to carry a piece away as a relic. They tried to buy her chaplet. Many hoped she would perform a miracle for their benefit. Children were brought that she might lay her hands on them, and she was consulted in cases of illness, and attempts were made to purchase her influence with the Virgin. But she did not wish money, and sometimes in a passion, when it was forced on her, she threw it on the floor.

It was a hard life, and at the age of twenty-two she was taken away to central France, to the convent of St. Gildard in Nevers. Yet there, too, she was pur-

sued by the irresistible desire to obtain favors from her saintly person. People believed they would become lucky just by gazing on her; or if they could, on the sly, rub some medal against her dress, that suited their purpose better still. She wept with weariness. "Why do they torment me like this?" she said. "What more is there in me than in others?"

As she grew older, her illness became more and more pronounced, and, when not confined to her bed, she spent long days in an easy-chair, her only diversion the recitation of her rosary, or the reading some pious author. She was very little, the smallest of the convent sisters, and she was very thin, and her face long and hollow. When well she showed a childish liveliness that won the love of her associates, but her sufferings sometimes made her cross-grained and even rough. After her little displays of temper she repented with remorse, and hastened to ask pardon of every one, in great fear that she would surely be damned for her unholy conduct.

Her infirmities increased until, in her last days, she could only drag herself from chair to chair. As her nervousness and asthma grew more aggravated she had spasms of coughing that left her pitifully weak and exhausted. She again tried the Lourdes water, but, as before, without gain. "Heaven is at the end," she sobbed, "but how long the end is coming!"

On Easter Monday in the year 1879, she was seized with a fit of shivering, and with hallucinations in which she saw the devil prowling about and jeering at her. In great fright she cried out to him to be off. Death brought its welcome relief the latter part of the same week, and for the three days following multitudes came for a last look on her face. Even in death there was no solitude, and the crowd brought medals, chaplets, and pictures to rub against her garments, hoping for one more favor. Now her body rests at St. Gildard beneath a stone slab in a little chapel, amid the shadowy silence of the old trees of the convent garden. She has peace at last.



XIII

A HUNT FOR A BATTLE-FIELD



EARLY in the afternoon of one of the scorching days, that seemed, judging from my experience, to be the unvarying type of weather in Lourdes during the summer, I took a train for the north. Soon the mountains and the big wooded hills were left behind, and we were traversing the endless levels of the western coast country.

A hundred and fifty years ago most of the great district lying between Spain and the river Garonne was a treeless waste that yearly grew more barren. The sun and wind vied with each other in making the land drier and dustier. From the stormy Bay

of Biscay came tempests that raised the sand into great drifts as if it had been new-fallen snow, and sometimes the shifting dunes buried whole villages. The outlook for the region was very dark, and its inhabitants were in despair. Then came an inspector of roads, a man named Bremonnier, with a plan for bettering things. He built fences, and on the leeward side of them sowed seeds of the broom, and behind the broom started young pines. The fences lasted long enough to protect the broom while it was getting well started, and that in turn sheltered with its hardy tangles the tender pine shoots until they were large enough to take care of themselves. The pines spread, and their roots bound the loose soil together. Then canals were made to drain the wet parts of this reclaimed land and carry the surplus water to the dry. What formerly was a desert is now a district of considerable value, which furnishes its population with a comfortable support.

It is a monotonous stretch as seen by the railroad traveller, always the same hour after hour — pine forests and scrubby barrens, and an occasional little woodland hamlet with a few cultivated fields round about. At the time of my journey, harvesting was in progress ; and all through the afternoon and evening, till the daylight failed, I saw the peasants, both men and women, reaping their small plots of wheat and barley with their hand sickles. But the chief industry of the people is

forestry — especially the collecting of resin. Every pine tree that has advanced beyond the sapling stage has a long, vertical gash cut through its bark, and at the base of each gash a scoop-shaped metal spout is inserted to convey the sluggish flow of the pitch to an earthen cup hung just below.

I kept a constant watch from the car windows in the hope of seeing some of the stilt-walkers, who have given this part of France a unique reputation. They are a real people, though I must say the descriptions of them sound more like fairy tales than sober fact. In the days before the pines covered the land the unstable sand drifting over the dry plains made ordinary walking difficult, and stilts were considered necessary for every one. At that time the inhabitants were mostly shepherds, and stilt-walking was a very useful accomplishment to the watchers of the straying flocks. But the region is not good agriculturally; the grass is thin and coarse, and the wool produced is so poor in quality that sheep-raising brings slender returns and of late years has been largely abandoned. The people have been gradually coming down to earth to work in the pines, yet there are parts of the country where stilt-walking is still general. An adult considers four feet to be about the proper elevation above terra firma, and a native with the balancing pole in his hands, which it is customary to carry, is almost as much at

ease in going about on stilts as other folk are in walking, running, or standing on the ground. If I had known just where to find the stilt-walkers I would have sought them out, but I met no one who could tell me definitely — only that they dwelt somewhere among the dunes of the southwest coast.

The compartment in which I travelled was well filled — in part by my fellow-passengers and in larger part by their luggage. The French are an amazing people for carrying parcels on their journeys. They have bags, boxes, and bundles of all sizes and shapes ; and the getting all this baggage into the apartment with them when they embark and out when they reach their destination is the occasion of no little bustle and excitement. If you sit next the door in the direct line of the inflow, or exodus, as the case may be, you have need of cast-iron shins and the temper of a saint.

During the journey some of the baggage goes on the shelves, some under the seats, and some in the narrow aisle on the floor in company with the passengers' feet ; but the seats themselves are the favorite place of bestowal, and the owners of the baggage show great reluctance to give up the space thus appropriated to newcomers.

When the journey is at all long the travellers carry a lunch — and this lunch always includes a bottle of wine, whether the repast is elaborate, or, in its solid

portion, simply bread and cheese. A party of three, two women and a little girl, with whom I shared my seat, gave me a pretty good illustration of French lunching on the evening of this journey across the pine levels. They had bread, cold chicken, sweet biscuits, two bottles of wine, and one bottle of water. It made the apartment look like a small restaurant when they got all these things spread out, and they kept both their seat and the one opposite in a state of chaos for an hour or two with their leisurely sipping and nibbling. The bottle of water was for the little girl — not that she was to have no wine, but because she took it diluted. She did the diluting herself, and slopped all around the premises until, between her and her elders, the wine was gone. Then she threw the empty bottles and the chicken bones out of the window, and having eaten herself tired, cuddled down by her mother and went to sleep.

At Bordeaux these people got out, but others took their places, and, in preparation for a long night ride, the travellers removed their shoes and loosened their clothing. Many were going straight through to Paris, where they would arrive about breakfast time next day. The night was dark, and when the journey was resumed there was nothing but blackness outside the windows, while within was only one dim apartment with its lounging occupants. Midnight came and

passed, and still we were rushing along through the mirk, and by the time we reached Poitiers, where I had decided to stop, it seemed as if we must have travelled half across Europe.

My only reason for leaving the train at Poitiers was a desire to visit the famous battle-field of that name, where the English under the Black Prince fought the French five hundred years ago. All I knew as to the battle-field was that, according to the histories, it lay five miles north at a place called Maupertuis. It was three o'clock in the morning when I arrived at Poitiers, and the night was so far spent it seemed hardly worth while to go to a hotel. The grayness of the coming dawn was already apparent, and I concluded I could not do better than to seek out my battle-field while the day was still comfortably cool.

In accordance with this decision I left the station and took a northerly direction, confident that two hours' walking would bring me into the vicinity of the scene of ancient combat. The town was asleep and silent, and I met no one on its streets save two or three laborers moving heavily off to their work, their every footfall startlingly distinct on the deserted pavements. After leaving the city behind, my way kept along the borders of a little river with banks grown up to bushes and tall poplars. The stream was sluggish, and on its mirror-like quiet the lily-

pads floated, while weeds and water plants were prolific in the shallows, and rushes grew thick and green in the ooze of the shores. Now and then a frog croaked with a hoarse, cracked voice, as if he had caught cold by staying out too much in the night damp. The birds were singing their early matins, and the east presently reddened with the promise of the sunrise, and then the sky took on the light pearly tints Corot was so fond of painting.

By four o'clock there began to be signs of life at the farmhouses I passed, and I thought it was time I found out something definite as to the location of the object of my quest. I stopped at a gate and hailed two men who were moving about the farmyard within. But they knew nothing of any such place as Maupertuis and my questions puzzled them very much. They had heard of the English, but did not seem to be aware there had ever been trouble between them and the French; and the older man of the two said if they had ever fought a battle in that region it was news to him. He was over sixty years old, and he could remember everything that had happened around Poitiers way back to when he was a small boy, and there had been no battle he was sure.

I took to the road again. The sun had risen, and farm work was now beginning in earnest. Smoke was rising from kitchen chimneys, there were already

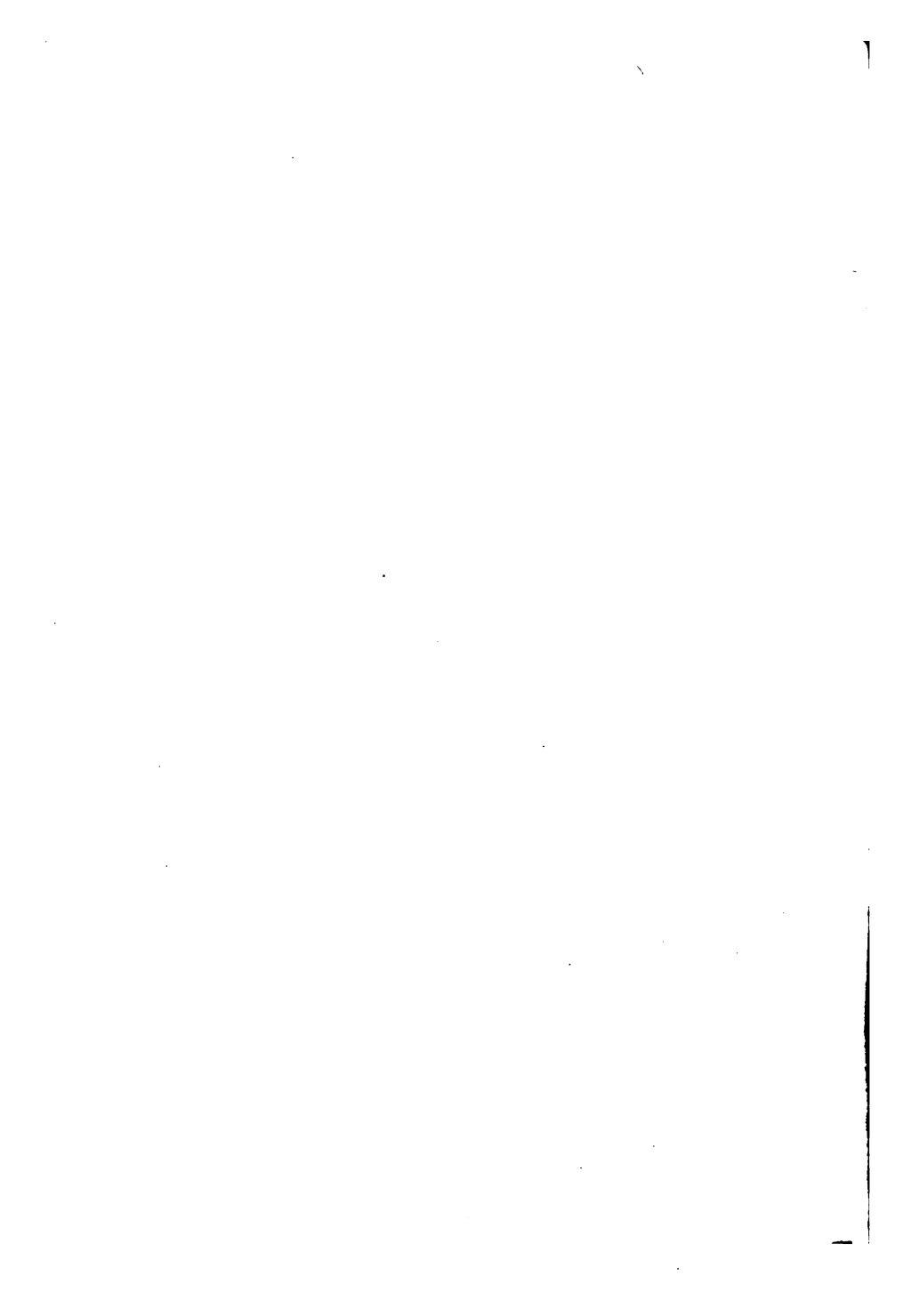
laborers in the fields, and the women were driving their cows and sheep to pasturage. At length I reached a village and, with the hope of getting breakfast, stopped at a little inn. The landlady was not in the habit of serving lunches, and all she could furnish was a loaf of bread and some hashed meat. The latter consisted mainly of bones chopped in small pieces, so that I was constantly setting my teeth on them unexpectedly. I found it was wise to proceed cautiously, and the bone sorting gave me time to consider what I would do next in hunting for my battle-field. If my authorities were correct it could not be far distant, and after I finished my bones I interviewed several of the villagers on the subject. But it was all a mystery to the local inhabitants. Maupertuis had apparently disappeared, and no legend of the old fierce fight remained.

On a venture I decided to turn from the road I was pursuing, and try the other side of the river. From the name of the village, Grand Pont, I judged the stream in that neighborhood must be spanned by a large bridge. If so, I failed to find it, for when I had crossed some low meadows, following what seemed to be the chief highway in the direction of the river, I found nothing at the end of my road save slight indications that there had formerly been a ferry at that spot. It was a pleasant nook, and I loitered by the

waterside in the hope that chance would present a way of crossing. I had noted as I came from Poitiers an occasional small, flat-bottomed boat tied to the banks, and I thought some stray fisherman might come poling along in one of the craft, and then I would ask him to ferry me across. But the fisherman failed to materialize.

The only life in the immediate vicinity was a woman on her knees beating her washing among the tree shadows of the other shore. I could see a few houses across there back a little way on a hill slope, and presently a man came down from them driving half a dozen cows before him. The cows waded into the water, and stood knee deep drinking, while the man talked with the washerwoman. After the cows had been driven away and only the lone woman, monotonously scrubbing and pounding by the water's edge was left, I grew discouraged and concluded to return to Grand Pont. I tried to take a different route from the one by which I had come, and so lost myself in a labyrinth of dwindling byways and meadow paths, each of which terminated in a thick hedge or impassable ditch. I was compelled as a last resort to seek out and be content with my original road.

As I approached the hamlet I was accosted by a man at work in a garden — one of the villagers I had previously questioned about the old battle-field. He





THE SHEPHERDESSES

took great interest in my search and, since I saw him before, he had been thinking the matter over and had recalled three places within walking distance which began with the letter M. If he was me he would go to all of them, and, without a doubt, one of them would prove to be the right one. He named them over, and though they did not any of them sound at all like Maupertuis, I said I would go to the nearest of the three, and see if I could there get more exact information. The man was much pleased by my decision. Indeed, he was so happy in the assurance he had helped me that when we parted he took out his snuff-box, removed the cover, gave the contents a shake, and held it out toward me invitingly. I appreciated his friendliness, but snuff taking was not in my line, and I felt compelled to decline the honor. To make up for my delinquency the man took a double dose himself, and, hardened as he was to the snuff habit, had to sneeze as a consequence.

At the place which began with M, I was as much at a loss to discover the whereabouts of the apparently mythical battle-field as ever. No one knew the least thing about it or about Maupertuis, and I plodded on again at random. I besought enlightenment of all sorts of people whom I met on the road, of men working in the grain-fields, and of men cultivating potatoes and hoeing turnips, of a woman baiting her cow in a

their hands on. By their cruelty and ruthlessness they had earned the honest hatred of every native on their line of march, and when they were cornered near Poitiers by sixty thousand French and compelled to fight, disaster was richly deserved. But in their cool, dogged, English way they prepared for battle, and in the strife and carnage which followed they themselves suffered scarcely any loss, while their assailants not only were put to flight, but left eleven thousand dead on the field.

I would have liked to walk over the very ground where the old battle was fought, but the place had proved too elusive, and it was now high noon, very dusty and very hot. I had had enough of tramping, especially after riding all the previous night, and I returned to Poitiers and the railway station.

I did not attempt to explore the city. Its attractions to the sightseer are not accounted very great, and the only thing which could have led me to further touring that day would have been the chance of finding some spot closely connected with the life of St. Hilaire, who died Bishop of Poitiers, in the year 368. Few, if any, of the early Christian saints had a career more picturesque in its abstemious simplicity. St. Hilaire belonged to one of the noble pagan families of Romanized Gaul, but was early converted, and at the age of fifteen we find him retiring into the wilder-



REAPING BY HAND

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the

ness to meditate and pray. There the devil visited him with manifold temptations, and when Satan finally saw that his wiles were of no avail and was about to depart, he vented his disappointment by jumping on St. Hilaire's back and mocking him.

St. Hilaire presently came out of the wilderness, but his life continued to be one of extreme humility and self-denial. He cut his hair only once a year, he slept on a bed of rushes laid on the bare ground, and he never washed or changed his garments until they fell to pieces. During his early manhood, he restricted his daily diet to cold water and a pint of lentils, but he at length concluded he was pampering himself unduly, and substituted dry bread for the lentils, and instead of water that was simply cold he used that which was not only cold but muddy. At the age of twenty-six he made still another change, and for three years subsisted on wild herbs and raw roots. For five years after that his food for each day was six ounces of barley bread and a half-boiled turnip. This diet proved a little too slender for a man in his prime. He found that his eyesight was failing, while his body was afflicted with weakness and scrofula. So he added olives to his bill of fare, and the menu thus made up he did not vary until his sixty-third year, never tasting anything besides. Then he thought his body was worn out and death so near it would be just as well to

discontinue the bread and the turnip. Yet his end was farther off than he imagined, for he lived twenty years longer, his daily rations a broth of flour and bruised olives, that made in all hardly five ounces of food and drink. Even then he fasted from sunrise to sunset, never varying this custom whether well or sick; and after all, "such was his fervor of mind that he seemed as if fresh come to the service of God at an advanced age when other men drop off."

It is one of the most astonishing records we have of the power of the mind over the body; but, though I honor St. Hilaire's ardent spirit and unfailing piety, I would not like to copy him exactly. It seems to me I should at least want to keep on with the bread and the turnip, after I had got used to them.



XIV

ALONG THE WEST COAST



I SEEMED to have a fatality in my French touring for arriving at strange places anywhere from nine o'clock in the evening to sunrise in the morning. Thus when my wanderings at length took me to Dieppe, I reached my destination late at night, after my usual habit. As it chanced I fell into the hands of a rusty old porter loitering about the station exit, who beguiled me with assertions that there was a good hotel a few steps distant, and they spoke English there, and he would show me the way, and nothing could be better. So he shouldered my baggage, and off he went with me following after.

On and on he walked up this street and down that in what seemed in the darkness an aggravatingly long and tortuous way. I began to be alarmed and wrathful ;

but I felt that my knowledge of French was not equal to adequately expressing my sentiments and decided to await developments. I tried to imagine what I would do if the man led me to some shabby little hostelry that looked forbidding and desperate. But my fears were wasted, for we presently turned aside from the street, went under an arch and through a quiet court, and were at the door of a large and entirely respectable hotel.

The next morning I found that my hotel fronted a fine sweep of crescent beach, and after breakfasting I went for a walk along the shore. Dieppe is a famous watering-place, but just then the beach looked more like the adjuncts of some sort of a laundry than the resort of fashionable bathers and pleasure-seekers. For a great distance the shingle was overlaid with newly washed clothing and house linen. Here and there a woman was seated on a wheelbarrow knitting and waiting, till, in the process of drying, her share in the great array of washing needed turning. When the garments had dried on both sides to a watcher's satisfaction, she shook them free from any sand that had blown on them, folded them, loaded her barrow, and wheeled her wash up to the town.

Southward, beyond the row of hotels that fronted the harbor, was a line of lofty chalk cliffs. On the beach in that neighborhood many scattered men and

women with stout baskets on their backs were picking up certain of the rounded water-worn stones that strewed the shore. What the stones were to be used for and what were the qualities considered desirable in them I failed to discover. A peculiar thing about the stone gatherers was that they were cave dwellers, and their homes were in the white cliffs which rose near by, with bases barely out of reach of the tides. The crags were honeycombed with caverns of all sizes, though not all of them were occupied. Some of the cave dwellings were very diminutive—just single little rooms with a rude wooden door closing the entrance. As I was passing one of these, the door opened and I saw a grizzly looking man working inside, and a small boy ran out with a bit of shining stone in his hand and held it up to me. "Please buy a curiosity, M'sieur," he said, and I gave him two or three coppers and took the stone.

The entrances to the larger caves were wholly unclosed, and when I ventured near to one of them and saw nothing to hinder, I went inside. Its walls must have been fifty feet high, its width about the same, and its depth fully two or three hundred feet. A dry, chalky odor pervaded it, and it had a feeling of great quiet and mellow coolness. A young dog sprang out from a stone kennel near the entrance and barked till the place resounded as if there had been a dozen dogs

yelping instead of one; but, when I approached, the four-legged sentry stopped his alarms and became frisky. On the opposite side of the entrance, a little farther within the cave, a room had been excavated into the rock, and in its low doorway stood a bent and withered old woman regarding me curiously. At the back of the cavern were the homes of other cave dwellers, merely spaces partitioned off with low stone walls. In each there was usually naught but a bed, a table, a few cooking utensils, and some baskets for stone gathering; though in one instance I saw pictures cut from illustrated periodicals fastened against the walls.

This was all so interesting that I went into another big cavern not far distant and, as before, was received with a vociferous canine greeting. The barking proceeded from a little dog who had jumped out in front of a stone wall halfway to the rear of the cavern. He was the defender of a home; for back of the stone wall was a bed, and on the bed sat a little girl, hardly more than a baby, all alone in that great cavern cooing and laughing and stirring the echoes as happy as could be. She did not mind my coming, but smiled up at me perfectly fearless and undisturbed. An hour later I visited this cavern again, and besides the baby, found her father, mother, and older sister. They had kindled a fire, and the cavern was blue and hazy with its smoke. The man and woman were





THE CLIFFS AT DIEPPE

standing at a table straining some hot liquid into a basin. The baby was talking to herself on the bed and playing with an old parasol. It seemed a strange living-place for a child — that great cavern, its gray walls sparkling with broken flints, and the sea pounding always on the beach without the entrance!

My waiter at the hotel said these cave people were a lawless, gypsy race, and it would be dangerous to go among them after dark. If that was meant as a warning it was unnecessary, for later, the same day, I went on southward to Havre. Of Havre itself I have nothing to say. It is an ordinary, thriving, commercial town, and my only excuse for bringing it into my narrative is that there I saw a second-hand market which was unique in my experiences. I had strolled into the market-place, a clean, broad square strewn under foot with gravel and pebbles. At its centre was a fountain around which was gathered a great number of empty handcarts. The goods for which the carts had been a conveyance were now displayed on the ground, sometimes on pieces of carpeting or bags, but oftenest simply laid on the pebbly earth. It was the queerest lot of antiquated rubbish imaginable. One would think the venders must be very optimistic to fancy it was salable. The things looked like the findings of the garbage gatherers and the refuse of the junk shops. Yet there was no lack of customers.

They thronged up and down the alleys left clear between the rows of merchandise, all looking for treasures and bargains.

You could hardly mention any article of clothing, or any household implement, or farm tool, or piece of furniture or of tableware but that was represented in this second-hand mart. Here stood a battered bed, and, keeping it company, was a goodly number of chairs that were themselves not at all goodly—for some lacked backs, and some lacked seats, while others were without their full quota of legs, and did their best to make themselves presentable by leaning on the cripples next to them. You could buy wrecked window-curtains, trunks with the lids gone, pieces of stove-pipe, tubs made out of barrels cut in half, oil stoves and oil paintings, both cracked, and the latter yellow and dim enough to pass for old masters. If you wanted a pair of bellows, or some rusted spoons, or anything in the line of candlesticks, lanterns, or lamps, you had a great variety to pick from.

Perhaps you might fancy this leaky umbrella, or a squirrel-cage with an out-of-order whirlabout, or a little coffee-mill to fasten to your kitchen wall, or these balances which will not balance. Perhaps you have need of something in the line of pots and pans, crockery or glassware. The assortment is large if you do not object to the things being somewhat

out of date and rather the worse for wear. Here are bottles of many sizes and shapes, old books, jewelry of all kinds, and tawdry shelf ornaments that have long since ceased to be ornamental. If you have a lock without a key, here are a hundred or more great rusty doorkeys on a wire for you to choose from; and if you have a key and no lock, you can probably find a lock here to fit your otherwise useless key. There are wornout shoes enough to fill a shoestore, some with mates and some without. Many venders displayed large quantities of clothing, garments for men, women, and children. There was apparel to fit one out from head to foot—from dirty straw hats and dented derbies to ragged and much-darned socks. Then there were extensive stocks of tools—farm tools, carpenters' tools, mechanics' tools, all of them encrusted with rust, and many of them broken, or misfits that you would think could be of no earthly use except for old iron.

But the curious crowd looked, and poked, and priced, and bought. They did not purchase in haste, but examined the things with care and let no flaw escape them. They took an investigating sniff at the cans and bottles; and, inside and outside, they knew exactly what they were getting and even had an inkling at times of the articles' histories. The purchasers were nearly all of the poorer class, the women bare-

headed and the men wearing blue frocks. To them the second-hand market was nothing extraordinary, for it is held at Havre one day each week, and other French cities have markets of the same sort. It certainly had a peculiar fascination, and amongst the rubbish there were more or less antiquities that no doubt had genuine value as curiosities. But the ordinary customers buy for use, real or fancied. They cannot resist the appeal of a bargain, and I was told that after they had kept their acquisitions for a time they were very apt to bring them back to the second-hand market to be sold again to some other imaginative purchaser.

After leaving Havre, the next pause in my coast-wise journey was on the border line between Normandy and Brittany, at Pontorson, the railway station that is nearest to Mont St. Michel. The mount is five miles distant, and the easiest way to get there is to take one of the carriages or omnibuses always in waiting at the station; but I chose to go on foot. Long before I reached the borders of the bay, in the midst of which rises the lonely mount, I could see it looming far on ahead in the shadowy distance, the more noticeable because all the region around is low and flat.

Formerly the mount was an island, but now it is connected with the mainland by a long, curving arm

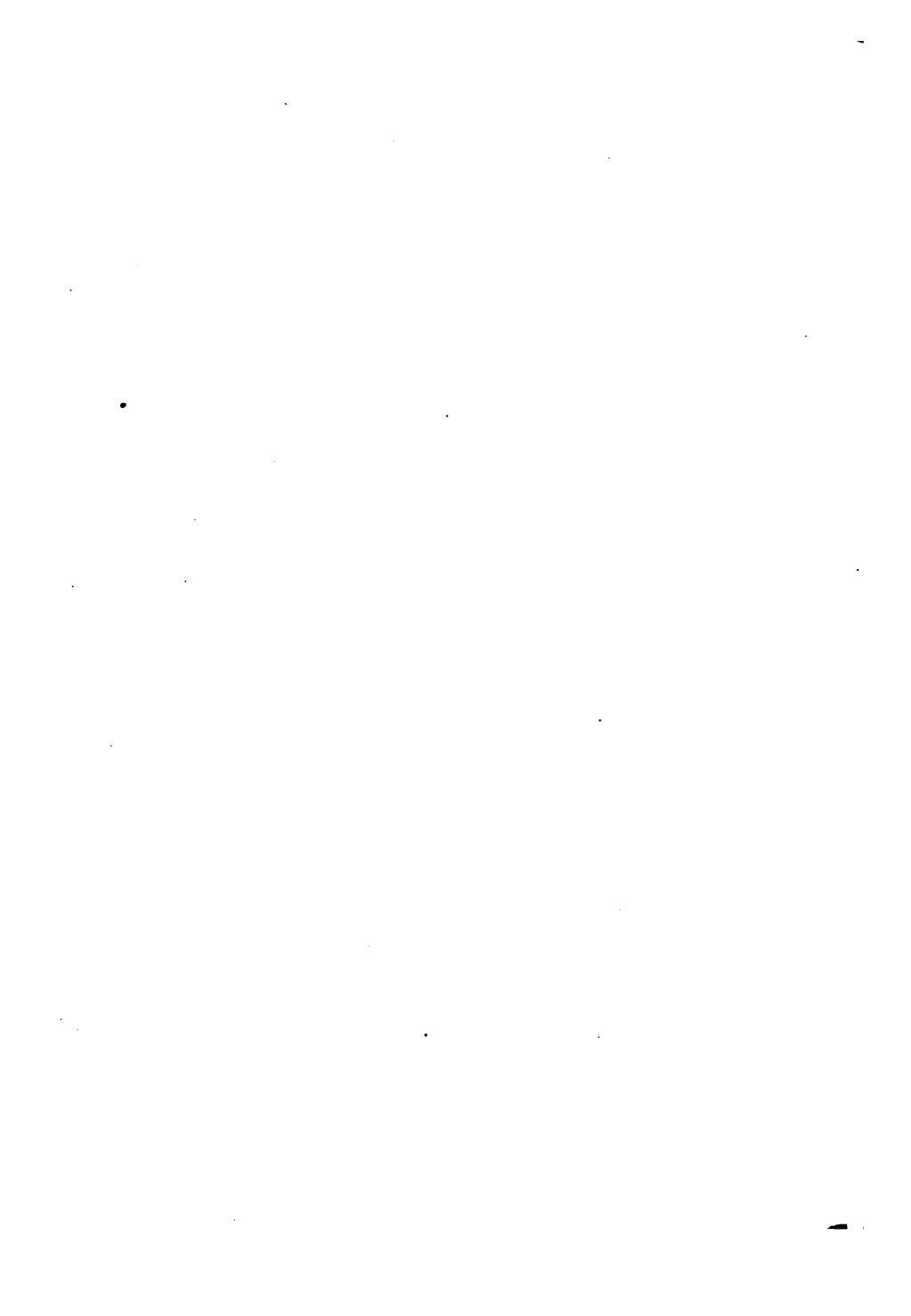
of roadway that is buttressed on both sides by broad slopes of stonework. It is a strange-looking bit of nature — this little mountain of the sea — so compact, and its sides so abrupt that it appears as if the whole thing might be some architectural contrivance of man's, in which nature had played no part. Nearly every foot of available space on the steep rocks is built over. Around the foot of the crag are the ancient fortifications — thick and lofty walls, strengthened by frequent towers and bastions; while the summit of the rock is crowned with a church, and with a castle that was well-nigh impregnable in the Middle Ages when it was built. The church is a Benedictine Abbey, founded over one thousand years ago by St. Aubert, in obedience to the commands of the Archangel Michael, who appeared to the saint in a vision. The fact that an inhabitant of Heaven had come to earth to leave orders about this particular spot made it sacred, and, just as is usually the case under like circumstances, pilgrims resorted to the rocks in great numbers, and by their pious gifts the monastery was erected and greatly enriched.

On the ragged precipices that face the open sea, patches of grass and clumps of storm-twisted trees find a foothold. The other side has a more gradual fall, and is terraced into a number of corkscrew lanes and footways, along which the houses, hotels, and shops

of quite a little village are built. The livelihood of the two hundred residents depends almost entirely on the visitors to the place, who, attracted by the fame of its singular picturesqueness, gravitate to it from all parts of the world.

Far up the zigzagging stairs, that ascend in nearly seven hundred steps from the highest point of the village to the abbey, were three old women, on the day of my visit, sitting at about equal intervals apart on the stone stairway. The first sold roses. The second had a placard hung from her neck, stating that she was blind, and asking the reader for a contribution. The third was idiotic, or dumb, and made strange whining noises, showed a tray of shells, and held out a deformed hand to appeal to public sympathy. There in that narrow stony way, the three mendicants seemed more like ancient witches, with dubious powers to cast spells and decide destinies, than like ordinary human beggars.

When I returned to Pontorson the day was far spent, and I was rejoiced to see a little house near the station marked "Restaurant." I interviewed the stout, good-natured landlady in charge, and arranged with her for board and lodgings as long as I chose to stay in the vicinity. She would get me my dinner at once, she said, and fell to cooking in her little kitchen, while I sat down outside, by one of several





THE SECOND-HAND MARKET

tables under a wide piazza roof, that jutted out so far over the tiny yard as to nearly cover it.

I had a French course dinner, in which was conspicuous, as the chief item in the bill of fare, a ghastly-looking chicken, brought to the table with its head on. For drink my landlady uncorked, as a matter of course, a bottle of wine. I asked if I could have instead a glass of milk, but she did not catch the idea, and thought I was saying wine was not strong enough, and that I wanted champagne or whiskey. When I finally made clear my request, she shook her head in great surprise. She had never seen any one who preferred milk to wine before.

Like a large proportion of women in France, my landlady seemed to have entire charge of her house and business. She did the buying and selling, and carried the purse; while her husband puttered around, did small jobs, wiped the dishes, and ran errands. The woman had twice his vigor. But she was no exception in this, for among the tradespeople the French women undoubtedly have a remarkable capacity for business, and for managing themselves and the men too.

I was at Pontorson over Sunday, and, in the early morning of that day, went for a walk about the village. Sunday is more observed among the rural folk in this part of France than in most sections, and the place

was very dull and quiet. Interest centred in a muddy canal where various groups of men and boys were fishing. I felt the usual curiosity that is aroused the world over wherever one sees angling going on, and I stopped to watch proceedings. The fishermen were very successful, but, as their captures were without exception small eels six or eight inches in length, I soon tired of the monotony, and went on out into the country.

After tramping about three miles I reached a quaint little village of gray stone houses, most of them with thatched roofs. In a grove just aside from the chief street was a low old church, and its bell was ringing and worshippers were resorting in its direction. I followed the rest and entered the churchyard with its rank weeds and grasses, and its graves decorated with grotesque bead wreaths. Until service began I loitered outside, and then went into the church and sat down near the rear.

The building was like a fortress, its walls a yard thick and its windows heavily barred with iron. The low wooden pews were bare of cushions and unpainted; but, to compensate, the farther end of the room was quite gaudy with cloths and candles and images, while the ceiling was painted blue and spangled with white stars. A high priest with a shaven crown led the service, and he was assisted by two lesser priests, and

by three little boys who carried around candles and books, and picked up the high priest's skirts at the proper time and adjusted them so that he could sit down gracefully.

The men of the congregation were all up in front and the women and children in the rear. Frocks of blue and black were worn by the men, and white caps by the women and girls. The service was intoned, and there were parts for the priests, and parts sung by the men, and parts sung by the women. At the points where the people were to rise, some one up near the altar gave a single rap with a cane, and when they were to sit, gave two raps.

Toward the close of the service one of the gowned ecclesiastics—the sexton, I think it was—brought out what looked like a common market-basket containing nearly half a bushel of bread cut in small pieces. The basket was lined with a linen cloth large enough to overlap the edges and allow the ends to meet underneath where they were loosely knotted. Beginning at the front, the sexton came slowly down the single narrow aisle, passing the basket now to a pew on this side, now to a pew on that side, and every one in the congregation from infants up to centenarians took a piece of bread. When the sexton approached the rear of the room he seemed to suddenly realize that he was going to have considerable

bread left, and he handed out quite a good-sized end of a loaf that was in the bottom of the basket to an old woman, in addition to the small piece she had already taken. She ate the small bit and put the loaf-end in her pocket. At the very last the sexton distributed what remained by handfuls to several children in the back seats, and that kept them munching the rest of the service. This disposal of the surplus appeared thrifty and charitable, but I was not quite reconciled to it as a matter of religion. Whether the bread was believed to be the body of Christ in reality or symbolically, feasting on it seemed incongruous.

Bread is served in church all over France in something the same way every Sunday, and turns are taken by the various families of the parish in providing it. The well-to-do direct the baker to make a kind of sweet bread, and they not only get enough for the church, but extra loaves which they send after service, one to each family of their particular friends among the neighbors. It has been blessed by the priest along with that cut up and distributed at the church, and it is valued accordingly. This aristocratic bread is eaten by all the attendants at mass with relish, and the children devour it with special eagerness; for to many of them sweet bread is a rarity at home. Notice is given a week beforehand to the housewife who is



MONT ST. MICHEL

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to provide bread for the following Sunday. The sexton conveys the information of what is expected by bringing to her home after service a piece of bread saved from that day's distribution.

My French touring came to an end at St. Malo. In earlier times this ancient seaport was much more important than now, and its inhabitants distinguished themselves as bold traders in times of peace, and as daring privateers in times of war. At present it has a look of decay and of unchanging antiquity; yet it is not dead. It still has a considerable share in the Newfoundland cod fisheries, does a good deal of ship-building, and exports to England an immense amount of farm produce drawn from the great agricultural country surrounding. The situation of the town reminds one of Mont St. Michel, for it is on a small island with the waters of a bay round about. The island is less than three miles in circumference and lies just off the mainland, with which it is connected by a broad causeway. It is completely covered by the town, which gives the impression of being much crowded. Expansion has been only possible skyward, and the streets are very narrow, and the gloomy, gray buildings run up to a height of five or six stories.

An interesting excursion I made from St. Malo was to Cancale, a Breton fishing village nine miles distant. Cancale itself is on a big hill well above the sea, and

though the place has a salt-water flavor, for genuine brininess you have to descend to a hamlet hugging the shore far down the slope. There the sea was dotted everywhere with fishing craft, nearly all the inhabitants clacked about with wooden shoes, and the men looked like sailors, and the strong, sunburned women looked like sailors' wives and daughters. The wharves were odorous of fish, and the men were coming and going with oars and nets over their shoulders. In the midst of the village, fronting the sea, was a tall cross, bearing on it the figure of Christ to which, no doubt, many a fervent prayer had been said in time of storm.

The shore was the common resort of all the village loiterers — of the men and women, when not engaged in work, of the grandmothers and the toddling little ones in their charge, while for the small boys and girls it made a royal playground. The waves were always casting up treasures, the outlook on the sea was unfailling in its interest, the sand possessed inexhaustible possibilities of pleasure to the youngsters, and they were never tired of going in swimming or of wading in the shallows. I watched some of them building a fort. It was quite large, and several of the builders could stand in it at the same time. When the waves of the incoming tide began to lap its border the children sat down on the walls of their fortress, and defended it to the last moment, until the crumbling sand

let the floods in, and then they fled with shouts of glee.

I had come to Cancale by a steam tramway, but I returned on foot to get better acquainted with the country. It looked almost wooded with its apple orchards and its frequent rows of trees dividing fields. One curious thing about the apple trees was that some of them were in full blossom while others had good-sized green fruit on them. It was now the first of July, and I could hardly believe my eyes until I had seen the blossoms repeatedly, and gone to the trees and made a examination. The people along the way were mostly busy digging early potatoes, and packing them into great baskets for the English market, and an endless caravan of carts of every sort and size was on the road creaking along toward St. Malo, whence their loads would start on the voyage across the channel that evening.

The day following my trip to Cancale I went to the other side of St. Malo harbor by a little steamer, and rambled along the coast westward as far as St. Lunaire, originally an old farming hamlet, but now a suburban watering-place. Its only feature that was especially picturesque, was a windmill on a hilltop just outside the village. The big sails were motionless when I saw it, but this was the owner's fault, not dull trade or lack of wind. According to local accounts, the pro-

prietor was a man with a mania for fishing, and if you were in a hurry for your grist you must hunt for him along the rocks of the seashore, and try to induce him to come back to business. This old gray mill ground all the grain raised in the neighborhood; but it did not draw custom from any great distance, for windmills are not uncommon in Brittany, and there was another in sight a few miles farther along the coast.

Down the hill from the windmill was a farmhouse, and as I was passing it, I was reminded that I was thirsty by seeing an old lady drawing water with a rope and windlass from a well in the corner of the farmyard. I begged a drink, and she invited me to go with her to the house where she would fill a glass for me, and I could sit and be comfortable. That suited me exactly, and I followed her with her dripping oaken bucket across the yard and into the kitchen. There I met another elderly woman, the sister of my escort, the two being the owners and, most of the year, the sole occupants of the big farmhouse. They were very kindly, and my environment was so interesting that I was in no haste about leaving.

The house was used only in part for farm purposes. It had been remodelled to accommodate summer boarders, as had most of the old St. Lunaire homes, but the kitchen was a genuine farm kitchen still. The

two old ladies, whose abode this had been from childhood up, would not have felt comfortable had the living-room been changed. They were well-to-do and had an independent income, yet they continued to do all the accustomed drudgery of the place and to live primitively. They farmed some on a small scale, took care of their own garden, and kept a cow and a calf. Most of the day they sat knitting in the cool of the big kitchen; yet they were dressed for out-of-doors, and their white caps were concealed beneath black straw hats. It was too much trouble to take off their hats every time they came in. They liked best to keep them on constantly, so that they were all ready to step out into the sunshine on errands or to work about the place whenever it chanced to be necessary or they in the mood for it. During my visit they only removed these hats once, and that was to bring in from a back room a great barrel churn which they adjusted in preparation for butter making.

There was a piquant smack of antiquity about all the household ways, and, as well, about all the home furnishings. In the middle of the kitchen was a long, solid table with a chip under one leg to make it set level on the earth floor. This floor was a compound of clay, pebbles, and gravel, that was hard and fairly smooth, considering the material of which it was made. In peasant homes such floors are common, and when

new and well cared for they are quite presentable, but constant sweeping and the softening of inevitable sloppings wears the best of them uneven after a time. They have to be repaired yearly to keep them in good order.

At the end of the big room in which I sat was a large fireplace flanked on either side by substantial settees. It had neither crane nor grate, and the fire was built on the low hearth. The cooking was done directly on the coals, or with nothing more intervening than a three-legged griddle, or trivet. I looked up the wide-mouthed chimney and had a glimpse of the sky, and saw some pieces of meat suspended in the sooty, cavernous flue to cure in the smoke. For fuel, wood was burned, and a vacant space underneath a near cupboard served instead of a woodbox.

The kitchen ceiling was cut into long parallels by the sleepers of the floor above, and to one of these a heavy iron hook was fastened, so that when a pig was killed it could be brought in here to hang for a day till it was ready to cut up. A bed was let into the wall in one corner. It was very high up, and it would have been difficult to get into it without a ladder had it not been for a bench backed up against it down below. The bed had a handsome spread, and was draped with curtains, but it conveyed no sense of utility, and had plainly been made up by the house-



BESIDE THE SEA

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keeper to be looked at. Some farm kitchens have two beds in the same wall niche, the one above the other, like berths in a steamer cabin. Often such beds are provided with a narrow space behind, a sort of cupboard or closet which can be used as a dressing-room after one has crawled over to it between the couches and drawn the curtains. All along one side of the kitchen in this old farmhouse was a great wardrobe reaching from floor to ceiling, its woodwork of cherry, its trimmings of brass, and the whole kept shining and scrupulously free from dust by frequent rubbings and scourings. In the middle of the wardrobe, and apparently built as a part of it, was a tall clock with a slow-swinging pendulum visible through its glass door. The various drawers and lockers behind the polished woodwork were full of clothing and of vast stores of linen, with space reserved for the crockery and tableware, and, somewhere down below, for the fireplace pots and kettles.

Among other things in the wardrobe was about a bushel of white caps, as I learned when, in response to some question of mine, my hostesses exhumed them with housewifely vanity. I think they had never destroyed one in all their lives, for those they had worn as young girls were there with the rest. The general pattern of all was the same, but the youthful caps were of lace, while those they wore now in their

soberer years were of plain cloth. They were St. Lunaire caps, and it would not do to vary them. A cap is a kind of village trade-mark, and the women of each little Breton community have a style all their own. They take great pride in the dainty neatness of these articles of apparel, and no matter how elaborate the frilling, with its necessity for laborious ironing, they are always beautifully done up. What advantage there was in maintaining a village monopoly of a particular type of headgear, I could not discover, except that it enabled the natives to tell afar off from what place a woman came by the pattern of her cap.

When I returned to St. Malo the tide was out, and the aspect of the harbor was very different from what it had been at full tide when I left. The bay had dwindled amazingly, the town wharves were high and dry, and where had been deep water was now a great waste of sand and mud, reaching out a half mile or more from what were the shores at flood tide. Our steamer had to stop long before it reached the town, and the passengers walked the rest of the distance, following a narrow causeway of rough stone blocks. The inner harbor had no water in it whatever, save for a few shallow ponds, and out in its very middle a bare-foot old woman, with a reef taken in her gown, was tramping about in the mud and gathering something in a basket. At the entrance to the harbor was now

a deep gap, and many people were passing back and forth by a slatted wooden path laid across the bed of the channel. As for the shipping, it was all propped up against the quays, with hulls perfectly bare.

The rise and fall of the tide is a remarkable feature of St. Malo. Ordinarily there is a difference of about twenty-five feet between low and high tide level, while the spring tides show a variation of nearly fifty feet.

Among the other vessels in the harbor was an English boat, scheduled to sail for Southampton that night, and I decided to go with her. She was being loaded with tons and tons of new potatoes, and with butter, eggs, and like produce. I stood by and watched them lowering the goods into the hold — boxes, crates, barrels, and baskets. What a hearty-eating race the English are, I thought, with these shiploads of things for their tables coming constantly, the year round, from every port in Europe, to say nothing of the vast amount they draw from more distant countries!

The boxes and barrels containing the potatoes were not always perfectly tight, and sometimes a few tubers got loose and fell on the wharf. These did not go to waste, for there were a number of poor townfolk in waiting ready to grab for them. That it was not an unquestioned right of theirs was shown by the furtive haste with which they secured their booty. The most successful of the potato gleaners was a family party of

four — a mother, an infant in a baby-carriage, and a little boy and girl. The last two were the most active. They each had a tin pail, and as fast as they could fill these receptacles they ran with them to their mother, who kept in the background. She took the pails and emptied them into the baby-carriage, out of sight underneath the child and its blankets. It was a lucky day, and they got the carriage full, so that the baby would barely stick on top and keep the suspicious load hidden. Then the pails were filled once more, and the little girl stuffed her apron, and the little boy stuffed his jacket, and they went away with their plunder toward the town.

Eight o'clock came, and the tide was at its full ; and still the freight was being hustled aboard the steamer and smashed down into the hold. Another hour passed, and we cast loose, and on an outflowing current turned toward England, picking our way carefully to the open sea, among the fortified islands and rocky ledges that dotted the outer borders of the harbor.

My wanderings in France were at an end, and I was not sorry, although the experience had been in many ways delightful, and I came away with an increased respect for the French people. There is a good deal of humbug in this talk about "decadent" nations. But after all, I am Anglo-Saxon, and when I boarded

the English vessel which was to take me across the channel, the racial clannishness asserted itself, and nothing could have been sweeter to my ears than the homely dialect of the English sailors and cabin stewards. I could have hugged them, and I had a realizing sense of the nearness of our relationship such as I had never had before; and when I thought the matter over, it seemed to me that if America was the best country in the world, certainly England was the second best.



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